

# Place attachment and place identity amongst older Italians in Newcastle upon Tyne

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## **Abstract**

In the social gerontology literature, there is a wide agreement on the importance of affective bonds with places for a positive experience of 'ageing-in-place'. This includes a sense of attachment to and identification with places, also defined as a 'sense of home'. However, the ways in which these affective bonds with places are negotiated by ageing migrants is yet a fairly neglected area of research. Nevertheless, with increasing numbers of older migrants adopting a transnational lifestyle or returning to the country of origin after retirement, there is a pertinent need to explore ageing migrants' meanings of the affective bonds with places.

Through an ethnographic approach, this project aims to gain a better understanding of the sense of attachment to and identification with places by members of an older Italian migrant population in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. The main argument of this work is that a 'sense of home' – or a lack of it – shapes the conditions for ageing-in-place in the context of migration.

Firstly, I explore how the negotiation of belonging, which relates to social and political aspects of the environment, contributes to a 'sense of home' in the context of migration. Secondly, I illustrate how the attachment to places left pre-migration, through transnationality and 'home-making' practices, elucidates the expectation of ageing. Thirdly, I address how the facilitators to a 'sense of home' in the context of migration mark a new status in later life. Finally, I focus on the barriers to a sense of identification with the places inhabited, that co-exist with a sense of attachment, but that undermine the sense of belonging to these. Ultimately, challenging the assumption of older Italian migrants as a homogeneous population, this work highlights how the diversity within the group is shaped by the relationship established with places in later life.



## **Dedication**

This piece of work is dedicated to my mother Rosaria, my father Osvaldo and my brother Marco.

With all my love.





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## **Statement of contribution**

This is to declare that the work contained in this thesis comprises original work conducted by the student under the supervision of Dr Cathrine Degnen, Dr Katie Brittain and Dr Suzanne Moffatt.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree at any other institution.



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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Situating the Project at the Intersection of Ageing and Migration**

Over the last decades, global ageing population, due to low birth rates and increasing life expectancy, is presented as a challenge for research, practitioners, policy makers and those who are experiencing it (WHO, 2007a; Gilroy, 2012; Kowal *et al.*, 2012). Consequently, there has been heightened interest in older adults' needs and on the enhancement of their quality of life within a wide range of academic disciplines (Lui *et al.*, 2009; Plouffe, 2010; Iecovich, 2014). In the social gerontology literature for addressing the ageing population issue, the relationship between older people and their socio-spatial surroundings has been one key area informing research (Rowles, 1983; Altman and Low, 1992; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Peace *et al.*, 2005b; Phillipson, 2007; Gilroy, 2008; Walsh *et al.*, 2012).

Understanding how people engage with places through the ageing process in their everyday lives and what makes places meaningful for older people, have become significant research foci amongst scholars on ageing (Rowles, 1983; Altman and Low, 1992; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Peace *et al.*, 2005b; Phillipson, 2007; Gilroy, 2008; Walsh *et al.*, 2012). In particular, social gerontology researchers have become interested in older people's sense of attachment to places. This refers to the emotional connections they form with places due to the meanings that these hold (Rowles, 1991; Altman and Low, 1992; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Peace *et al.*, 2005b; Wiles *et al.*, 2009; Buffel *et al.*, 2014). The sense of attachment or 'affective bonds between people and places' (Tuan, 1974, p. 4), include a sense of identification with and belonging to places (Altman and Low, 1992; Clifford, 1997; Basu, 2004; Burholt, 2006; Scannell and Gifford, 2010; Lewicka, 2011).

The affective bonds between people and places are considered fundamental in later life for ensuring a positive experience of ageing (Rowles, 1983; Altman and Low, 1992; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Peace *et al.*, 2005b; Gilroy, 2008). This growing body of literature considers the effects that places – such as, homes, neighbourhoods, communities and beyond – have on health and well-being in later life. Overall, there is an agreement in social gerontology that the relationship that older people establish with places is important to sustain well-being through the

ageing process as this improve older people lives, facilitate community participation and cohesion of the locality (Burholt, 2006; Gilroy, 2012; Walsh *et al.*, 2012).

Furthermore, scholars of older age have frequently associated a positive experience of ageing with the concept of 'ageing-in-place' (Andrews *et al.*, 2007; Wiles *et al.*, 2009; Iecovich, 2014). This refers to a presumed desire to stay within the homes, neighbourhoods and communities in which older people have lived over their lifetimes (Gilroy, 2005; Wiles *et al.*, 2012; Iecovich, 2014). The affective bond with inhabited places for 'ageing in place' refers not merely to attachment to a particular home, but also to the social and the cultural sphere at community or national level (Andrews *et al.*, 2007; Wiles *et al.*, 2009; Wiles *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, older adults being able to 'age-in-place' refers to extent of their sense of attachment, identification and belonging to places, as characterized by a symbolic and emotional function as people age (Wiles *et al.*, 2012). This argument raises an important question: what are the roles or meanings of places in the everyday life of those who are not 'ageing-in-place' in the traditional sense? These are people who age in homes or communities where they have not resided for all their lives, such as, for example, an older migrant population.

Despite the fact that social gerontology has established the importance of the relationship between older people and the places they inhabit to promote a positive experience of ageing, less focus has been given to the diversity in the ageing process (Torres, 2006; Buffel *et al.*, 2012; Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015). In fact, although for decades older migrants have been acknowledged as a substantial component of the ageing population (Warnes *et al.*, 2004; Warnes and Williams, 2006; Gilroy, 2008), little is known on the ways place attachment might be experienced and negotiated by older migrants. Therefore, there is a lack of research on the intersection between ageing and migration (Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015; Zubair and Norris, 2015; Torres and Karl, 2016).

As such, this research project aims to address this knowledge gap by situating itself at the intersection of ageing and migration, questioning: what is the meaning of 'ageing-in-place' in the context of migration? To answer this question, I look at the relationship older migrants establish with the places they inhabit. However, before moving on to address the core of the research question, I wish to clarify the research

interest in the section that follows, by introducing the contemporary phenomenon of the mobility of older people following retirement.

## **1.2 Research Problem: Understanding Mobility of Older People after Retirement**

Demographic information on the distribution of the ageing population has shed light on patterns of migration, including the movements of older people after retirement, raising awareness of the increasing number of people with migrant backgrounds in Europe and in the Western World (WHO, 2007a). In social gerontology, the intersection of ageing and migration has become a strategic point of enquiry, specifically regarding the conditions for ageing in the context of migration or for relocating elsewhere (Ganga, 2006; Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015; Zontini, 2015; Zubair and Norris, 2015). The reason for this research focus, is the need to better understand the bourgeois phenomenon of post-retirement migration as one of the consequences of globalization (Phillipson, 2007; Phillipson, 2015; Torres and Karl, 2016; King *et al.*, 2017).

In particular, in the United Kingdom, it has been acknowledged that there is a progressive increase in the mobility of older people who choose to age in different places (Gilroy, 2008). Recently, as reported by King *et al.* (2017), the databases on pension payments from the UK Department for Work and Pensions show that a higher percentage of UK pensions are spent outside the national boundaries:

‘pensions paid to recipients living abroad passed 1 million in 2005 and is growing at 9 per cent per year (compared to the annual growth in the number of the UK-national pensioners, 6 per cent); and that two-thirds of these foreign-resident UK pensioners were living in (in order of importance) Australia, Canada, the USA, New Zealand and South Africa’ (King *et al.*, 2017, p. 186).

Research in this area aimed to explore the effects of the choice to relocate elsewhere on health and well-being in later life. It has been shown that British expatriates relocating to South Europe wish to age in different places, as they consider themselves to be happier and have a better quality of life elsewhere (King *et al.*, 2017). In a parallel fashion, studies of international retirement migration (IRM) have focused on the lifestyle of post retirement migration: older adults relocating from Northern European countries to South European countries to experience positive

ageing (Božić, 2006; Casado-Díaz, 2006; Torres and Karl, 2016). However, the individual choice to age outside of the national boundaries has not to be seen as an isolated phenomena, as it might also contribute to the movement of social, cultural and economic capital – which include, amongst others, labour force and participation (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016; King *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, there is a need to improve understanding of the mobility of older adults after retirement, exploring the relationship that these groups of people have established with places.

Among those who are not ‘ageing-in-place’ in a traditional way, there are also older migrants. The relationship older migrants have established with the places they inhabit in the context of migration, requires specific research attention. This is because studies of ageing that intersect with migration show the alternative pathways taken by retired migrants as they age in foreign countries, namely: returning to their home countries; staying in their host countries; or establishing residence in both (Razum *et al.*, 2005; Bolzman *et al.*, 2006; Ganga, 2006; Klinthäll, 2006; Rodríguez and Egea, 2006; Barrett and Mosca, 2013; Baykara-Krumme, 2013; Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015; Zontini, 2015; Baykara-Krumme and Platt, 2016; Torres and Karl, 2016).

Furthermore, researches on the distribution of older migrants across Europe have shown how older population differs amongst countries: the UK, being historically a receiving society of migrants, has a higher number of ageing people with ethnic diverse background (Gilroy, 2008; Kristiansen *et al.*, 2016). According to the 2001 UK census, many of these are retired labour migrants (Zontini, 2015). Exploring place attachment among an ageing migrant population in the UK might be particularly important, as these groups are more likely to reside elsewhere after retirement – if they are not attached to the places where they are growing older in the context of migration.

In social gerontology, there have been recent attempts to evaluate the life satisfaction of older migrants after retirement age. One example of this is the study of Baykara-Krumme and Platt (2016) on life satisfaction of older Turkish economic migrants in Germany, compared to that of return migrants or non-migrants. This study shows how economic migrants, having finished their working life, evaluate their life satisfaction. Although the scholars emphasized the extent to which migration



impact on well-being in later life, they have not looked at how place attachment might shape the choice of relocating elsewhere.

More importantly, as stated by Cutchin (2001) the connection between ageing, migration and ageing-in-place has been underestimated due the predominance of behavioural approaches that conceived migration as a discrete life-event. By adopting, instead, an approach that considers older people as embedded in a personal history, a place, and a possible future, Cutchin (2001) suggest re-thinking the connection between ageing-in-place and migration. The lack of understanding the despair, culture-dependent perception of home amongst older migrants, has been emphasized also by Lewin (2005), according to which these groups are likely to encounter obstacles to developing a being at home feeling. Studying how older migrants conceive home might inspire political debates and policy decisions. By this, the scholar means facilitating organizations and authorities who are planning actions, in particular regarding older migrants living requirements and addressing socio-political discussion on home-help services (Lewin, 2005). Furthermore, in works focused on the impact of transnational migration on home-making practices in later life (Walsh and Näre, 2016), the attention to older migrants' *ageing in place* has been driven by a concern within gerontology about inequality and social exclusion (Buffel and Phillipson, 2016). Thus, the importance of this study is to focus on ageing migrant sense of home as understood as a material dimension, but also an imaginative realm belonging.

Drawing on these ideas, I propose that further research is needed to better understand how older migrant's population negotiate the relationship with the places they inhabit, as these groups of people are susceptible to further 'migration' towards the country of origin or elsewhere, in their post-retirement age. One way of tackling these themes is to look at the affective bonds established with and through places in later life from an older migrant's perspective, as these might determine the conditions for a positive experience of ageing in the context of migration. Thus, my dissertation explores the affective bonds established with places inhabited in the context of migration, from the perspective of older Italian migrants living in Newcastle upon Tyne. However, before turning to the research aim, some definitions are required of the main concepts adopted.

### 1.3 Concepts Definition: Older Migrants' Relationship with Places

#### 1.3.1 *Defining a migrant population*

In this dissertation, I use the term 'migrant' to refer to the subject of the study. This choice is due to three main conceptual reasons.

Firstly, I acknowledge that 'immigrant' or 'emigrant' are politically loaded terms, that contribute to shaping a nation-state centred definition of migration (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016; Jones *et al.*, 2017). I adopt the term 'migrant' to avoid assumptions about belonging and membership that underpin the terminologies 'immigrant' and 'emigrant', reflecting the shift in conceiving 'bounded national societies to more complex social and spatial configurations' (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016, p. 206). In fact, over the past decades, scholars of migration have suggested alternative terms to address state power issues: such as replacing these with the word 'transmigrant' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002) or 'mobility' (Cresswell, 2006), although these terms might not be clear enough or be redundant (King, 2012; Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016). Therefore, in this dissertation, I wish to abandon nation-state centred perspectives of migration, and simply use the term 'migrants' to denote those who have moved either temporarily or permanently from one country to another. I consider 'migrants' also those who have acquired citizenship during the course of their life, in the country of migration in which they reside. I refer to descendants of migrants as 'second'<sup>1</sup> – or third-migrant generation', regardless of their citizenship.

Secondly, I refer to the subject of study as 'migrants' as this is the driving force of this research project, taking into account the implications of mobility of some older people after retirement, as stated above. Thus, the main focal point of my research is providing a better understanding of older migrants' relationship with places, and the definition of the subject of the study as 'migrants' offers key access to the broad phenomena of ageing as intersecting with migration. As such, despite the fact that older migrants might have established their presence in the receiving society during the course of their lives, I wish to consider these groups of people as susceptible to further 'migration' towards their country of origin or elsewhere, in post-retirement age.

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<sup>1</sup> As illustrated by Wessendorf (2007), in the literature on migration, there is not a common agreement on the definition of 'second generation'. Whilst she uses the term to define also those who moved during early childhood and attended school in the adoptive country, in this dissertation I use 'second generation' to describe people who were born in the host country with immigrant parents.

Thirdly, I adopt the term 'migration', to avoid pre-existent assumptions in migration studies about the relationship established with places from a migrant point of view. In order to underpin this argument, I illustrate these assumptions by, firstly, introducing the concept of 'home' as a locus of belonging and, secondly, by distinguishing the term 'migration' from 'diaspora' and 'transnationalism' as central to frame the research question of this study.

### *1.3.2 'Sense of home' in migration, diaspora and transnationalism*

Migration, by definition, foregrounds movement to and from geographical places and thus implies a changing relationship to places (Appadurai, 1996; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). As illustrated above, there is a need to think about the relationship between older migrants and places, in line with the theorization of the notion of *Topophilia*, defined by the geographer Tuan (1974) as affective bonds between people and places. This bond is fundamental to the idea of place as identity, which refers to the feeling of being part of a place and identifying with it. In this dissertation, I adopt the metaphor of 'home' to explore the affective bonds established with places in later life according to an older migrants' perspectives. In fact, the definition of 'home' derives from feelings of attachment as exemplars of rootedness (Tuan, 1975). Thus, homes are physical entities but also operate on social and symbolic levels in interconnected ways, as they have been commonly associated with the concept of belonging to a place (Tuan, 1991).

The notion of 'home' has been tackled by many disciplines and from many different viewpoints. Humanistic traditions in geography (Tuan, 1974; Relph, 1976; Buttimer, 1980) agree in defining the home as the place with 'the greatest personal significance in one's life' (Relph, 1976). According to Hayward (1975), home is a locus in the space full of personal, social and cultural meanings. Thus, identification with places and sense of belonging are centred on the notion of 'home' (Buttimer, 1980). In addition, Douglas (1991) further illustrated the difference between the notion of 'house' as a space or a physical structure, and the concept of 'home'. The latter is defined both as a state of being, as well as a special place that evokes feelings of belonging (Douglas, 1991). As explained by Basu (2004) the concept of home is related to the one of a homeland:

‘Individuals continue to “center themselves” in a notion of home which itself centered on the specific spatial and temporal coordinates of the homeland’ (Basu, 2004, p. 169).

In addition, for Huber and Reilly (2004) feelings of attachment to places where a person feels at home, might occur in relation to a range of dimensions of self-affiliation, among which are the ‘homeland’ as the place of birth, and social connections (i.e. family members) in the place of residence. In line with these ideas, I also adopt the concept of home not merely to identify a physical location, but also a place that inspires feelings of belonging.

Having defined the notion of home as a locus of belonging, I move on to consider how the ‘homing-desire’ (Brah, 1996), or ‘reconstruct[ion of] a home away from home’ (Clifford, 1997) is a powerful motif in the literature on migration (Gilroy, 2000). This is because migrants or people in collective displacement have always been associated with a sense of turmoil for having left, or for not being able to return ‘home’ (Clifford, 1997; Basu, 2004; Basu and Coleman, 2008). This trend, defined as ‘emigrant art’, reflected a Victorian narrative characterized by a backward glance, framing emigration within a sense of nostalgia and pathos (Basu and Coleman, 2008).

In this respect, the anthropologists Basu and Coleman (2008) formulated an interesting contribution to the condition of marginality during displacement. The authors draw on Kaiser (2008)’s examination of a Sudanese refugee settlement in Uganda, to highlight how the feeling of loss – both material and immaterial – refers to a liminal condition. According to the authors, this concept of ‘liminality’ recalls the studies of Turner (1979) on a form of blankness, and how it can be associated with the concept of ‘non-place’ theorized by Augé (1995). Amongst a migrant population, the similarity between the concept of ‘liminality’ and ‘non-place’, as stated by Basu and Coleman (2008), is in the extent to which both point to ‘metaphors of absence in migration in attempting to characterize the social and material results of mobility’ (Basu and Coleman, 2008, p. 323).

Consequently, these contributions hint at the importance of recreating a ‘sense of home’ in the context of migration, referring to the desire of (re) constituting spaces that provide security by a sense of identification and belonging to places amongst a migrant population (Basu, 2004; Basu and Coleman, 2008). For these reasons, the

conceptualization of attachment to places in a migrant population also implies the re-constitution of a 'sense of home' in the context of migration or pluralised homes; this is how the perspective of a migrant group differs from the one of a diasporic group of people, as I illustrate below.

The concept of diaspora, as articulated by Safran (1991), denotes groups of people dispersed from an original homeland, feeling alienated from the society of settlement, and that idealize and/or wish to return to -or restore- the original homeland. Scholars working on groups of people in diaspora studies have considered the connections to the place of origin and shaped the 'myth of the return', as a popular trope in the literature on migration (Safran, 1991). However, while early scholarship on migration tended to assume a uniform commitment to the homeland – having cultivated nostalgic images of a 'return back home' – recent research shows how migrants' relationships to places of origin may often be ambivalent (Leichtman, 2005; Ní Laoire, 2008; Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016).

The relationship with homeland from a migrant perspective might generate feelings of loss and endless conflicts, as shown by research conducted with Palestinian migrants in Greece (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016); in some cases the prospect of returning becomes increasingly remote, as in the example of the older Lebanese migrants in Senegal as explored by Leichtman (2005). In further studies, some Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants in Phoenix, Arizona, expressed no desire whatsoever to return to their countries of origin, as their connections with their places of origin had diminished. This is in line with similar studies about the nostalgic images of 'the return back home', that in some cases do not correspond to what people have experienced (Ní Laoire, 2008). Ní Laoire (2008), for example, has shown how Irish migrants who worked in Birmingham or London, once retired and returned back to their countries felt a sense that they did not belong, facing challenges to reintegrate again to the home community, not being able to re-adapt any longer to the peaceful life in their rural areas of origin. These cases reveal how the concept of 'home' in a migrant population is not related to a fixed location (Werbner, 2002; Staeheli and Nagel, 2006), but that some migrants create alternative ideas of 'home' and negotiate their identities in the countries of settlement. More recent contribution also challenge the idea of home as homeland (Näre, 2016) from an older migrants' perspective, as it will be better articulated next. Therefore, the term diaspora does not appear adequate to describe the phenomena in this study, given the assumptions

that this term conveys. I wish, thus, to instead adopt an exploratory approach to the relationship with places – and the concept of ‘home’ – established in later life from an older migrants’ perspective, by using the term ‘migrant’ to refer to the subject of the study.

In order to identify a ‘feeling of home’ for a migrant population, it is necessary to mention that this concept is neither fixed nor static (Ahmed, 1999; Fortier, 2000; Baldassar, 2001; Lam and Yeoh, 2004). According to Ahmed (1999, p. 341), the everyday experience of home involves the shift between spaces of belonging: in the movement between the place of origin and the place of destination. To cope with this separation, a migrant population might develop different perception of the self and of their own sense of belonging, generally constituted by a dual sense of attachment to places – both the provenance and that of immigration (Lam and Yeoh, 2004). In this respect, Basu (2004) asserts that the concept of home and belonging to places in a migrant population should not be interpreted as dualistic, opposite tendencies, such that movement through places excludes attachment to them. This is in line to the concept of ‘bifocal habitus’ as developed by Vertovec (2009) – which constitutes a dual frame of reference, referring to an on-going comparison between ‘home’ and ‘abroad’. In sum, migration scholars have argued that ‘by claiming both countries as their own “home” migrants may find new ways of belonging’(Ganga, 2006, p. 1398). In line with these ideas, I explore the study of both migration and ‘sense of home’ as an interdependent relation. Moreover, understanding the articulation of ‘home’ might help illustrate a sense of attachment and identification to places.

Having clarified the extents to which the concept of attachment to places in a migrant population relates to the ‘sense of home’, but differ from the notion of ‘diaspora’, I now illustrate the concept of ‘transnationalism’. In social gerontology, it is widely accepted that ageing migrants have to be contextualized within the experience of growing older in a transnational field (Grillo, 2007; Phillipson, 2007; Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015; Zontini, 2015). This refers to the process by which some long term migrants (not all older migrants), many years after the process of migration, continue to maintain contacts across nations, and have built social fields in both the country of origin and settlement (Torres, 2013). Thus, as a consequence of the transnational lifestyle they adopt for their whole working life, ageing migrants might have developed residential opportunities and social networks in both countries.

Walsh and Näre (2016) book deploys multiple case studies on what home means for transnational migrants in later life, recognizing that home is a process, rather than a place fixed in space. Moreover, the contributions to the volume challenge the idea of migration's spatial and temporal dislocation, by acknowledging instead multiple homes. In particular some contributions (Näre, 2016) deconstruct the idea of home as homeland, and a place for return for older migrants. This shift of perspective implies the notion of home as relational and rooted in transnational spaces. As articulated by Buffel and Phillipson (2016): 'the challenge, therefore, is not only to examine older migrants' articulations of home in relation to their current place of residence, but the influence as well of continuing transnational ties and practices (p.63).

This implies, firstly, the impossibility of viewing ageing and older age only from the perspective of national parameters (Ganga, 2006; Zontini, 2015; Torres and Karl, 2016); and, secondly, that the relationship older migrants build with places in later life – as well as the meanings attributed to them – cannot be disregarded (Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015). In this respect, scholars of ageing suggested considering older migrants' relationship with 'home', abroad or a transnational mix as having an impact on vulnerability or positive ageing in the context of migration (Warnes and Williams, 2006; Torres, 2013; Torres, 2015; Zontini, 2015; King *et al.*, 2017). However, one might ask: what is 'home' and what is 'abroad' from an older migrant's perspective? How does a migrant group negotiate their identity in different places? Or how does the experience of growing old in a transnational social field impact on sense of attachment and identification to these places? To answer these questions, this study aims to focus on the relationship that older migrants establish with places. In fact, understanding the articulation of ageing through the concept of place attachment – or multiple place attachments – and identification with these places, might help to gain a better understanding of what has been defined as 'home' or 'abroad' in the context of migration.

#### **1.4 Aim and Research Questions**

With an increase in the number of older migrants adopting a transnational lifestyle, or returning after retirement, a better understanding of the conditions that facilitate or impede a positive experience of ageing-in-place in the context of migration is urgently required. In particular, what factors shape older migrants' sense of attachment and identification to the places inhabited in the context of migration? Exploring the

literature on ageing and migration, the research interest relates to the importance of affective bonds with places among an older migrant population: place attachment (Altman and Low, 1992; Giuliani and Feldman, 1993) and place identity (Proshansky et al., 1983; Dixon and Durrheim, 2000)<sup>2</sup>. Before moving on to the research questions, I illustrate in this section the concepts I draw on in this thesis, and their relationship. As articulated by Rowles (2017) the concept of ‘home’ embraces notion of emotional affiliation, belonging, self-expression and ultimately of identity. However, a ‘sense of home’ is rarely discussed from the perspective of older migrants, with some important exceptions (Lewin, 2005; Walsh and Näre, 2016). I intend as a ‘sense of home’ an overarching concept, constituted by both place attachment and place identity. Rowles (2017) refers to the concept of ‘personal place identification’ indicating the individual way of being identified with places, that I adopt to define the notion of place identity. In line with Rowles (2017), in this dissertation the concept of place attachment refers to the intensity of the sense of belonging to places. However, whilst for Rowles (2017) a personal place identification is a component of place attachment, in this dissertation the two concepts will be explored as distinct, although interrelated, component for a ‘sense of home’, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Sense of home: Place Attachment & Place Identity

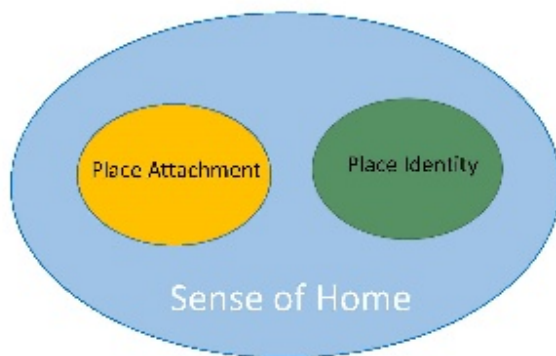


Figure 1 *Relationship between the concepts of Sense of Home, Place Attachment and Place Identity*

Interdisciplinary viewpoints and epistemological traditions of both place identity and place attachment are provided in the section 2.2.2. During the course of the following chapters, this diagram – or parts of it- will be expanded more in depth, to help the reader understanding the concepts I focus on in each chapters. The same diagram

<sup>2</sup> These two concepts are discussed in details in the section 2.2.2.



will be articulated in the final Chapter 8, to consider how the research has contributed to an enriched understanding of the relationship between a 'sense of home', place attachment' and 'place Identity'. Taking into account the perspective of a sample of older Italian migrants living in Newcastle upon Tyne, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a sense of attachment and identification with places inhabited in later life. The research aims are:

1. Exploring the relationship between place attachment and place identity amongst older Italians in Newcastle
2. Considering the way in which Italian migrants identities are transmitted across the life course through linked lives of the first, second and third Italian migrants generations
3. Exploring the contribution of material culture to transnational identities of older Italians in Newcastle
4. Illustrating the facilitators and barriers for creating a sense of home amongst

The second research question includes also the perspective of second and third generation Italian migrants. I explain here the rational for this: beside arguing for a continuous interconnection between person and environment, Cutchin (2001) draws on Dewey's pragmatism to understand the connection between elderly migration and ageing-in-place. The scholar pointed out at the temporally continuous aspect of experience as integrated with the past, present and future. I also refer to Elder Jr and Johnson (2002) principle of linked lives, amongst the paradigmatic principles that characterize the life course approach (that will be better explained in section 2.3.1), according to which people's lives are lived interdependently and sociohistorical influences are expressed through networks of shared relationships. In line with this approach, the 'sense of home', attachment and identification with places will be explored through the memories and experiences of first, second and third generation Italian migrants, as I am interested in understanding how some narratives are reiterated and transmitted across generations. The concept of generations does not necessarily refer to family bonds, but also to generations of migrants, -as it will be clearer when referring to chain migration in Chapters 6 and 7- or a cohort. Alwin (2012) defines the notion of cohort "a group of people who have shared some critical experience during the same interval of time (p.216). Therefore, a person's cohort membership might reveal about the unique historical period in which a group's

common experiences are embedded (Uhlenberg, 1988). In this sense, I argue that it is worthy to include the second and third generation of migrants, as expressing linked lives in maintaining identities amongst older Italians in Newcastle.

## **1.5 Justifying the Case Study**

The following section aims at justifying why affective bonds with places should be studied from the perspective of an older Italian migrant population -the group I have focused on this research- by relating it with the concept of the 'myth of return'. Following this, I provide a historical account of the presence of Italian migrants in the North East of England. As I explain in more details in Chapter 3, the participants in my research are representative of different historical periods. As such, a background knowledge of the historical aspect is necessary to gain an understanding of the socio-cultural context in which migration took place.

### *1.5.1 Older Italians in the UK and the myth of returning 'home'*

As stated above, the theme of 'return' to the country of origin is relevant for older migrants after retirement, and has been particularly salient for the population studied in this project. As shown by research on Italian migration (Colpi, 1991; Fortier, 2000; Gabaccia, 2000; Wessendorf, 2007) as soon as economic means would allow, Italian migrant would return in Italy for good. In particular, the study of Gabaccia (2000) about the Italian migrant population in the U.S., revealed how 40-50 per cent of those who left Italy during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century returned to their homeland from overseas. This was mainly due to the declining cost of travel, but also to the strong bond sustained through the course of their life with their homeland (Gabaccia, 2000). Similarly, the study about the Italians in Switzerland conducted by Wessendorf (2007) showed how returning to Italy after migration was already embedded in the pre-migration plan amongst many. Moreover, the study illustrated how the notion of belonging influenced also the second generation Italians in Switzerland who wished to 'return' to their parents' homeland.

Social gerontologists addressed this theme showing how older Italian migrants are likely to return to their homeland after retirement age (Ganga, 2006; Baldassar, 2007; Zontini, 2015). For example, Baldassar (2007) has illustrated the perspective of the Italians in Australia who maintained contacts with people in Italy, wishing to go back at some stage in their life. Furthermore, returning to Italy appears to be a major concern for Italian migrants in the UK. The study of Ganga (2006), on older Italian

migrants in Nottingham, revealed how the project of returning back home was already embedded as a pre-migration goal. This ethnography explained the reasons according to which Italian economic migrants justified the change of their initial plan. The motivations for not returning post retirement included economic reasons and socialization in the place of residence. The participants of this study asserted that they would have felt uncomfortable if they returned back to Italy. A similar study on the experience of the Italian migrant in Nottingham was undertaken by Zontini (2015). As mentioned above, the author explored ways of being and belonging in transnational ageing, finding that many older Italians wish to maintain social contacts with their homeland, through the use of technology or by frequently visiting their places of provenience. Her study concluded that ageing in the country of migration does not diminish the attachment to their home country and that the relationship with the homeland remained strong over time.

These studies on the experiences of Italian migrants groups have revealed how the relationship with places inhabited and attachment to homeland present nuanced differences. Thus, building on this literature, further research is needed to better understand place attachment and place identity in later life, from the perspective of older Italian migrants. The next section provide information that help to frame the context of this research.

#### *1.5.2 Research context: historical perspective on Italian migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne*

The following section aims to provide a historical perspective on the Italians' presence in the UK and Newcastle upon Tyne. Studies on British Italian history have been undertaken (Colpi, 1991; Sponza, 1992; Ugolini, 2011), in addition to those about the Italian population in the UK (Fortier, 2000) and on the experiences of the Italians in the North East (Shankland, 2014). To grasp the socio-cultural and economic status of the Italian groups of people I worked with, I highlight patterns in the labour market across what has been defined as the two waves of emigration from Italy by British Italian historians.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a geographically extensive system of labour mobility had emerged in Europe with the processes of industrialization and urbanization (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016). Britain led industrialization in manufacturing and steel production, becoming an important recipient of migrant workers (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016).

Similarly, between 1876 and 1920, there were around a million Italians migrating within Europe (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016, p. 36). However, only a small community of craftsmen (Barometers from Como, in Lombardy Region<sup>3</sup>) put down roots in the North East of England Newcastle, playing a leading role in the industrial revolution (Shankland, 2014). The *Comasque* colony was mostly confined to Newcastle 'at the time of the 1851 census, the moment of its maximum expansion, no more than twenty-three *Comasque* were present in the city' (Shankland, 2014, p. 28). Records of registers census (1841-1891) reveal that Italian migration to the North East of England was predominantly a male phenomenon: often Italian male married to British (or Irish) partners (Shankland, 2014).

In the nineteenth century, another group of itinerant Italians became familiar in the North East of England: they were the 'bands of dark-haired Tuscan' (Shankland, 2014, p. 31) mostly coming from near the Serchio river valley, in and around the town of Barga (now province of Lucca, in Tuscany Region<sup>4</sup>). They were known to the British census as 'figure makers' or 'statuette vendors', and were seasonal migrants whose trades were modest compared to the *barometai*, and given their transient lifestyle it is impossible to record numbers. The perceived sense of differences in the social-economic status between Italians, of Northern or Southern Italians is addressed in the work of Shankland (2014), who underlines the extends to which these people created affiliations or differences based on to the regions of provenance. In Newcastle, Shankland reports that it was not a single homogeneous community but two distinct social groups: the *Comasques* and the *Tuscans*. Until 1860, Lombardy and Tuscany were separate countries, and he adds:

'like all Italians in the still disunited peninsula, even these few emigrants far from home will have felt divided by strongly perceived differences of speech, cultural background, occupation, and economic status' (Shankland, 2014, p. 40).

The author remarks that, this process of stigmatization is still alive between southern and northern citizens. I address this point in Chapter 3, as some elements of this perceived sense of difference appeared also in the course of my fieldwork.

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<sup>3</sup> See Figure 2 for Lombardy Region.

<sup>4</sup> See Figure 2 for Tuscany Region.

After Italian national unification, in 1861, the first wave of migration out of Italy occurred for economic reasons and the agricultural depression (Colpi, 1991; Fortier, 2000; Fortier, 2006). In the North East of England, this mass emigration involved many of the Northern Regions of Italy (Piedmont, Lombardy and Veneto<sup>5</sup>) and Southern Italians especially from the kingdom of Naples, from an area known as Ciociaria, in Lazio Region<sup>6</sup> (Shankland, 2014). Most were seasonal workers who found employment in construction and in factories and mines, on big public work projects such as roads and railways (Shankland, 2014, p. 70). Some others used to live on the streets as musicians: there were puppeteers and tumblers and numerous animal exhibitors, but most played a musical instruments, organ-grinders called 'hurdy-gurdy', singing Italian opera and English popular songs (Shankland, 2014, p. 76). Street musicians were *zampognari* (bagpipes) and *pifferai* (fife and oboe players) in Italy:

‘farmhands, herdsmen, and forester and they were used to covering large distances on foot and spending long periods away from home’ (Shankland, 2014, p. 82).

Street entertainers from Ciociaria ‘rapidly led to the creation of the last majority of the oldest Italian-name families in the North East trace their roots’ (Shankland, 2014, p. 82) – and ‘from the 1880 also pedlars of home-made ice cream. Defining this historical period as the ‘Ice-Age’<sup>7</sup> the historian asserted that many Italians also discovered ‘how lucrative could be the making and hawking of ice-cream’ (Shankland, 2014, p. 100). This change was perceived by them and the whole society as an increase in the quality of life: ‘more stable, decorous and profitable metier’<sup>8</sup> (Shankland, 2014, p. 100)<sup>9</sup>. I will touch upon this point in Chapter 6.

In 1915-18 during the First World War, there were a high incidence of ‘return migration’: over 8,000 Italian-born men resident in Britain left for Italy to serve their country against Germany and Austria (Colpi, 1991). However, there was a

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<sup>5</sup> See Figure 2 for Piedmont, Lombardy and Veneto Region.

<sup>6</sup> See Figure 2 for Lazio Region.

<sup>7</sup> In the North East, the switch from the old role of streets entertainer to making a living off la crema occurred very slowly, apparently nearly 30 years later compared to London.

<sup>8</sup> “The southern ‘nomade’ were selling something other than noise in the streets, and what is more were even settling into the respectable role of “confectioner”, trading in ice-cream and sweets and other treats from small shops with their own names in big letters above the door.” (Shankland, 2014, p.101).

<sup>9</sup> The ice-cream would reach afterwards a great mass popularity thanks to the movies (ice cream sold in cinema) icon of entertainment (ordinary people would have ice-cream on a Sunday) and affordable to everyone (originally sold for 1 penny) (Shankland, 2014).

substantial group who did not, for example, the Naturalised Britons of North East served in the British forces. Some of the Italians, 'despite having the option of fighting for Italy chose to serve out the entire War I the British Army' (Shankland, 2014, p. 125). This information is particularly important for a thesis about place attachment, and identity, as this help to understand how with the outbreak of nationalism in Europe at the beginning of the century, the social and political dynamics impacted at an individual and collective level.

Nationalism is particularly intertwined with mobility of people across countries. Hence, during the years between the two wars, the mobility was framed as a privilege. In fact,

'in the 1926, embarrassment at this global opposition to the mass movement of unskilled Italian labour compelled the new fascist regime in Italy to reverse the long-standing policy of state backing for the emigration. The special red emigrant passport was scrapped and fresh passports were issued only to skilled workers and professionals who would not risk tainting Italy's image abroad'(Shankland, 2014, p. 125).

Moreover, during the fascist dictatorship in Italy, the stress on national identity enabled the construction of communities of Italians, considering themselves not as emigrants, but as 'Italians abroad'. This strengthened ties between the individual and the 'mother land', reinforcing the myth of return as I highlighted above.

The outbreak of the Second World War is considered an experience that specifically marked Italians in the UK (Colpi, 1992; Sponza, 1992; Fortier, 2000; Ugolini, 2011). This historical context is framed as unique in the wider Italian diaspora due to the "suffering and alienation that distinguish British Italians from other Italians worldwide" (Fortier, 2000, p. 91). Hence, several scholars have paid considerable attention to the anti-Italian feeling that erupted amongst British citizens after 10<sup>th</sup> June 1940, when the Italian Fascist Party led by Benito Mussolini declared war on Britain and France, preferring to ally with Germany (Colpi, 1992; Sponza, 1992; Fortier, 2000; Ugolini, 2011; Shankland, 2014). The experiences of the Italians in the North East during the Second World War will be explored through the voices of participants in Chapter 7, as it emerged how these impacted on a sense of identity among the first, second and third generation Italian migrants I worked with.

Italian post-war mass migration flows out of Italy is considered the second wave of migration. This increased significantly in the decades after the Second World War, towards different places of the globe (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016). A huge number of Italian migrants moved to the United States, Canada, South America, Australia, and in different European countries, including Britain (Colpi, 1991; Fortier, 2000). Britain found a ready source of workers in European Prisoners of War, generally for industries (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016). As part of the post-war recruitment scheme, Britain's Foreign Labour Committee looked favourably upon Italian labour migrants, as considered 'more assimilable into British society and thus as ideal permanent settlers' (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016, p. 44). Migrants were generally employed in job positions considered unattractive to native workers (McDowell, 2003). Some of these Italians (generally low or semi-skilled labour migrants) migrated from agricultural areas of Italy to areas of industry and commerce in the UK. Generally men were employed in industries and construction, whilst female workers were destined for domestic services, working as nannies, cooks, and housekeepers.

In the early 1970's along with the expansion of services (i.e., financial, restaurants), Italians were employed in the food trade or as hairdressers and more complex patterns of labour market segmentation emerged (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016). This was also reflected in the presence of the Italians in Newcastle upon Tyne (Shankland, 2014).

Currently, the number of Italian-originating residents<sup>10</sup> in England is 133,335 (0.3% of the entire population), as determined at census day (27 March 2011)<sup>11</sup> by the Office for National Statistics. Whereas in the North East Region, the number of Italian residents number 1,356 (0.1% of the entire population)<sup>12</sup>. It should be noted that this information is based on official statistics records; therefore, people who are only temporary rather than permanent residents, are not part of the study. Since no further documentation (i.e., Visa for Non-EU people) is needed to move from Italy to UK, at the time of this thesis writing, there is a lack of record of people's mobility. That is to

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10 For 2011 Census purposes, a usual resident of the UK is anyone who, on census day, was in UK and had stayed or intended to stay in the UK for a period of 12 months or more, or had a permanent UK address and was outside the UK and intended to be outside the UK for less than 12 months." (Office for National Statistics, 2011)

11 Records for this category are updated to 2001.

12 In the town centre of Newcastle upon Tyne, 367 Italian people have been recorded (this number does not include surrounding neighbourhoods. such as Gateshead. etc.).

say, the number of Italian people living in Newcastle upon Tyne and in the North East region may be higher.

## **1.6 Overview of the Thesis**

So far, I have introduced the readers to the key themes and topics of the dissertation by highlighting the relevance of this study on affective bonds with places, from an older Italian migrants' perspective. Adopting an exploratory approach on the concept of 'home', I pulled out some key themes derived from debates on migration as the conceptualization around attachment to and identification with places in a migrant population often linked with the metaphor of 'feeling at home' as a locus of belonging.

In Chapter 2, I familiarize the readers with the various debates that have shaped scholarly inquiry on ageing and migration. My approach is multidisciplinary and brings together different theoretical perspectives from the social sciences. I firstly provide a definition of the main concepts this project draws on: informed by social science' perspective on environment, I unpack the concept of 'place', and the affective bonds with places, such as place attachment and place identity. Secondly, I illustrate how older migrants have become the focus of attention in social gerontology during the last three decades. Thirdly, I draw out key themes from the material culture studies perspective, related to the concept of home and material possession in the context of migration. Finally, I remark on the need for further research on older migrant's sense of attachment and identity within ageing studies as intersecting with migration.

Chapter 3 offers some reflections on the methodology, outlining how this fits within the theoretical framework. I illustrate the ethnographic methods of research adopted: the process of recruiting participants, gaining access and negotiating participation within the community setting where I conducted participant observation. I dedicate reflexive attention to the role the researcher has in shaping the data generated during research encounters. I elaborate on data gathered: audio- recorded interviews, photographs and field notes diary. Secondly, I illustrate the thematic analyses adopted. Finally, I introduce socio-demographic information of the population in my research project.

Moving on to the findings of the research, Chapter 4 explores how a sense of identity is articulated by older Italians of different generations. It draws attention on a dual



sense of identity that shapes attachment to both the country of residence and the one of migration. It highlights how the 'feeling of home' in the context of migration is provided by the social aspects of the environment (given family, communities and neighbourhood ties) and formal practices of belonging (i.e. citizenship, politics of migration). The chapter highlights facilitator and barrier for a sense of identification with places amongst different Italian migrants' generations.

Chapter 5 addresses the concept of place attachment more in depth, by focusing on the complex relationship with places left pre-migration in Italy. It illustrates the juxtaposition between the mobility and attachment, by reflecting on the transnational lifestyle of some older Italians and their 'home-making' practices in the context of migration. This material provides a better understanding of how the relationship with places – including the maintenance of transnational ties and movements across nations – intersects with ageing and migration. Data show how Italian older adults' mobility depends by physical aspects of the environment and opportunities of social interaction amongst the transnational migrants. However, for those who are less mobile, the transnationalism is reproduced in the private dwelling. By looking at the materiality of things these people possess within their homes it was possible to grasp the meanings attributed to places, including the definition of 'home' or 'abroad'. Moreover, the agency in having re-creating a 'sense of home' in the context of migration by place-making lead the data analyses to Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 aims to shift the focus of the discussion from the sense of attachment to Italy, to the sense of attachment to the UK. Hence, the country of destination become the place where 'to feel home' during the life course as helped re-establishing new place ties after the process of migration. Starting from their youth, the participants recalled the struggle to leave their homes, the only home they have known. They highlighted their expectations before the desired process of migration, seen as an opportunity to find a place in which to have a better life. Participants' conversation in realizing a new identity in the context of migration were contextualized by constraints, sacrifices and finally achievements. These achievements in later life have been exemplified by the private dwellings, and/or businesses pertaining to the 'constitution of places of belonging'. In this chapter, I focus on the 'sense of home' in later life from the point of view of labour migrants who ascribed it in the public/private places they owned. These places, constituting a social hub in later life, help to overcome

loneliness and isolation, and provide with a sense of social 'insideness'. This was considered a facilitator for a sense of attachment and identification with Newcastle.

Chapter 7 is concerned with a key theme that emerged very clearly in the data collection: the barriers to place identity, considering the process through which the Italian identities have been 'othered' over the life course. This chapter addresses a sense of identification to the context of migration between discrimination and assimilation, from a third generation Italian point of view and from the perspective of the first generation Italian migrants who migrated during the post war years. The data highlights how these participants crafted their sense of self in a context of cultural discrimination, and this provides a better understanding of the constitution of an Italian migrant's sense of community. This informs on a shared set of cultural experiences, the legacy of which continues to inform notions of home amongst first, second and third generation of migrants. Thus, Chapter 7 provides useful insights to answer critical questions raised in Chapter 4, especially in relation to issues of identity amongst British citizens with Italian origin. In this sense, Chapter 7, the end of the dissertation, can be seen as providing a link back to the starting point of this dissertation.

The concluding Chapter 8 reflects on findings and highlights the implications of this research for future work. Finally, the dissertation includes an epilogue discussing how the changing political relationship between the UK and EU might have an impact on the themes being studied in light of the outcome of the UK's referendum, a vote that occurred just as I was concluding my fieldwork, in June 2016.

Figure 2 Geographical Map of Italy



source: <https://www.understandingitaly.com/regions.html>

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

As detailed in Chapter 1, this research aims to gain a better understanding of the conditions that facilitate or impede a positive experience of ageing in the context of migration, from the perspective of older Italian migrants living in Newcastle. In order to do so, I focus on the sense of attachment to and identification with places inhabited after migration. Therefore, I explore disciplinary perspectives that emphasize the subjective meanings and experiences of places amongst older migrants.

As such, this chapter firstly brings together the multiple disciplinary perspectives that explore the themes of place and affective bonds with places. Then, it focuses on the existing literature in social gerontology at the intersection with migration. Finally, it concludes by looking at a material culture studies perspective on the concept of 'home' from a migrant population point of view.

To begin with, I consider the field of inquiry focused on 'place', as theorized by scholars in human geography. Place is defined through a comparison with 'space': as such the concept of 'place' defines a dynamic process, invested with meanings and symbolic aspects, values and representations; whereas, the term 'space' narrowly refers to a physical location or container where events take place, conceived as abstract geometries – areas and volumes (Massey, 1999; Gieryn, 2000; Cresswell, 2009). Therefore, 'place' stands for both a concrete location and also a way of seeing, understanding and knowing the world (Cresswell, 2009). I also consider theorization on places from the environmental psychology perspective which, similarly, considers places as dynamic arenas that are both socially constructed and that constitute the social (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000). Both these disciplines sustain the located nature of subjectivity, by establishing the importance of places for shaping a sense of identity.

Secondly, I explore the 'affective bonds between people and places' (Tuan, 1974, p. 4). In the social sciences literature, a wide range of academic disciplines has focused on the affective bonds that people establish with places. This refers to an emotional connection in reference to places, focusing in particular on the sense of attachment to places and identification with them (Low and Altman, 1992; Dixon and Durrheim,

2000; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). However, over the last forty years, a large body of research has been conducted on affective bonds between people and places, with different approaches taken in different disciplines (Scannell and Gifford, 2010; Lewicka, 2011). In particular, there is a lack of clarity regarding the relationship between these two terms, and it has become a complex and contested domain of study (Lewicka, 2011).

The importance of affective bonds with places will be highlighted both from the perspective of human geography and environmental psychology as experienced by any person – without considering ageing. This multidisciplinary perspective will provide a better understanding of the concepts of place attachment and place identity amongst a general population. With these major thematic foundation laid, I then turn to how the conceptualization of place attachment and place identity has impacted on the fields of study of aging and older age (Rowles, 1983; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Peace *et al.*, 2005b). Thus, I consider the theoretical approach of social gerontology, for identifying the emotional relationship between older people and places.

In this dissertation, I focus on similarities and differences between the theoretical perspective of human geography and environmental psychology as highlighted by Andrews *et al.* (2009), as this will clarify contributions from geographical (Andrews and Phillips, 2004) and environmental gerontology (Wahl and Weisman, 2003). The shared interest of both fields is their focus on the relationship between people and places. However, whilst environmental gerontology has mainly sought to measure discrete and objective aspects of physical environments and people who use these spaces (Oswald and Wahl, 2005), geographical gerontology sought to understand how older adults experience place, including interactions, meanings and values associated with places, focusing on the centrality of subjectivity and autobiographical accounts (Rowles, 1983; Peace *et al.*, 2005a). In line with the geographical gerontology perspective, I developed an interest around older people's meanings of places in everyday life, by adopting a conceptual framework that concerns 'place'.

Despite the field of social gerontology having paid attention to the affective bonds established with places in later life, the perspective of an older migrant population is a relatively underexplored field of enquiry; therefore, section 2.3.4 aims to highlight a gap in the literature. This refers to the need for research attention on the concept of

place attachment from the perspective of long-term migrants, towards elucidating the main themes of interest for an older migrant population.

Consequently, the second section of this chapter illustrates the current debate on social gerontological research, as it intersects with migration. I specifically focus on diversity within groups of migrants, as highlighted by current debates on ageing migrants to avoid stereotypical assumptions (Torres, 2006). To grasp the complexity of ageing in the context of migration, I highlight the importance of transnationality (Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015). This will enable to understand why places and place attachment matter from an older migrants perspective (Buffel *et al.*, 2014; King *et al.*, 2017).

Finally, in social sciences the 'mobility turn' is defined as a perspective dealing with the spatial mobility of humans, that includes, amongst others, the circulation of objects, vehicles information and the psycho-social implication of such mobility (Cresswell, 2006; Sheller, 2017). In line with this perspective, I also conceive migration, not merely to the movement from *a* to *b*, but to an experience invested with meanings. Moreover, in Gatrell (2017) there are helpful insights into how mobility study can illuminate our understanding of ageing. A key feature of the mobility turn is the recognition that movements of people entail the mobility of objects. Thus, this chapter concludes with a consideration of the material culture perspective related to the meaning of 'home' for an older migrant population (Tolia-Kelly, 2004; Walsh, 2006; Basu and Coleman, 2008; Miller, 2008a). This focus is due to the fact that I adopted the metaphor of 'home' to explore the affective bonds between older migrants and places, as explained in Chapter 1. Moreover, this perspective provides a better understanding on how home, objects within the private dwelling and embodied practices, can be addressed as meaningful and expressive sites for the study of ageing from a migrant perspective.

## **2.2 Affective Bonds with Place**

### **2.2.1 Topophilia**

In social science, the humanistic tradition in geography conceptualises 'place' invested with meanings by those experiencing it. Geographers such as Tuan (1974), Relph (1976) and Agnew (1987) have long focused on the study of places, as expressing an attitude to the world and emphasizing subjectivities and experiences. According to Tuan (1974), while a sense of space is defined by an open area of

action and movements, a sense of place is about stopping, resting and becoming involved. Therefore, the conceptualization of places according to the discipline of human geography allows an in-depth articulation of how a 'place can become meaningful' for those who experience it.

The 'affective bonds between people and places' (Tuan, 1974, p. 4) has also been defined as *Topophilia*, which is a term developed by Tuan (1974) to refer to the emotional connection people establish with places, such as a deep sense of attachment to them. This bond is fundamental to the idea of place as identity, which refers to the feeling of being part of a place and identifying with it. This idea has been further developed by Relph (1976), who suggested that a sense of belonging to places illustrates the tendency of protecting what we feel as our place, from ones we perceive not to belong, as well as becoming nostalgic for places that we have left. Research on the relationship between people and places has illustrated that as an effect of globalization and increase mobility, the attachment people have to places has become progressively weaker (Relph, 1976). Touching upon the affective bonds between people and places, Agnew (1987) has also outlined three fundamental aspects that make places 'meaningful'. One of these is the 'sense of place', such as the subjective and emotional attachment people have with places. Thus, according to the humanistic tradition in geography, part of the conceptualization of the relationship between people and places pertains to the diverse creation of place ties or the subjective and emotional attachment. The diverse creation of place ties implies a feeling of being part of that place and willing to be identified with it. Although, I acknowledge that the history of the field of the humanistic tradition in geography is not as simple nor unidirectional as I here imply, this section was useful to provide insight on the affective bonds with places. However, as a sense of attachment to places, identification with these and the above mentioned 'sense of place', overlap within theoretical definition, I consider how a further distinction has been conceptualized in the field of environmental psychology. In the next section, I begin by defining place attachment and place identity.

### *2.2.2 Defining place attachment and place identity*

In order to explore the relationship between older Italian migrants and their socio-spatial surroundings this research project focuses on the concepts of *place attachment* (Giuliani and Feldman, 1993; Gustafson, 2001b) and *place identity* (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983), as I shall articulate in this section.

Place attachment can be defined as the bonding between people and places (Low and Altman, 1992; Giuliani, 2003; Livingstone, 2010; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). The emotional attachment or bonding between people and places can involve different private dwellings, neighbourhood, communities, the city, and so forth (Altman and Low, 1992). This emotional attachment is a multifaceted concept that includes several dimensions (Livingstone, 2010; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). For Livingstone (2010), place attachment refers, firstly, to the ability of places to enable people in achieving their own goals (functional dimension) and, secondly, to feelings developed toward these places (emotional dimension). The functional link an individual develops with a place is related to amenities, resources and interests. In contrast, according to Scannell and Gifford (2010), this concept is defined by three dimensions. The first dimension refers to the person who expresses attachment to places. On a personal level, the connection established might be formed by meaningful experiences or memories. In particular, it has been highlighted how a sense of attachment to places is heightened when a place is associated to experiences of personal realization and growth (Manzo, 2005) and I illustrate this point in Chapter 6. The second dimension refers to the psychological process of how affect, cognition and behaviours contribute to generating attachment. This can be identified by emotional investment in places (Hummon, 1992) or feeling of pride that generates a sense of wellbeing (Brown *et al.*, 2003), as I illustrate in Chapter 5 and 6. Finally, the third dimension refers to the characteristics of places that facilitate attachment, both in the physical and social aspects of the environment.

Studies on place attachment suggest that it is important for facilitating a stable sense of self: a person's continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and distinctiveness (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996), influencing community satisfaction and individual well-being (Theodori, 2001). Considering place attachment as a multidimensional concept helps to effectively explore its' manifestation particularly amongst an older population, as emphasized by scholars in gerontology (Rowles, 1983; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Burholt, 2006; Peace *et al.*, 2007; Walsh *et al.*, 2012; Buffel *et al.*, 2014). In particular, the work of Rubinstein and Parmelee (1992) highlights the importance of attachment to places during the ageing process, given the potential for maintaining identity, continuity and adjustment to ageing. These scholars conceive three essential constructs for understanding place attachment: who we are in the world; integration in the social environment; and physical space (Rubinstein and Parmelee,



1992). Gustafson (2001a) has theorized place attachment as characterized by three dimensions: the self, others and environment. This framework provided an understanding of meaning of places inhabited by older people.

On a collective level, place attachment emerges through meanings shared by groups of people and made manifest in practices of remembering (Degnen, 2005; Degnen, 2016). Hence, looking at social memories to understand the bond of people to places and how this bond influences identity and belonging as a collective process can generate significant insights (Degnen, 2016). This highlights how place attachment is influenced by the culture in common to groups of people, shaped by historical experiences and social dimensions, as I illustrate in Chapter 7, by showing how place attachment is situated in discursive actions. I further detail the concept of place attachment amongst an older population in section 2.3.

Place identity is a term coined by Proshansky and colleagues to refer to the way people describe themselves adopting places (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983). This concept is defined as a:

‘pot-pourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings, about specific physical settings as well as types of settings’  
(Proshansky *et al.*, 1983, p. 60).

Although the above definition has been criticised by later researchers as nebulous, it remains valuable as it represent a challenge to the disembodied notion of identity, by instead stressing a highly contextualized form of identification. In fact, Korpela (1989) prefers to narrow the concept of place identity to the process of ascribing similarities between the self and places, including mediating efforts to change environment (Korpela, 1989). Place-identity might function to express a coherent sense of self, in the extent to which attitudes, values, preferences, and meanings relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings. Hence, people are agents of their environments, who appropriate and create spaces of belonging (Korpela, 1989). I will touch upon this point in Chapter 5.

Subsequently, the work of Dixon and Durrheim (2000), amongst the changing landscape of post-Apartheid South Africa, represents a critical evaluation of research on place identity as highlighting, firstly, how places are imbued with meanings; secondly, that everyday discourses on place-identity are used as justifications of

person-in-place relations; and finally, how political dimensions are significant for defining behaviours and experiences which relate to place identity (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000). In particular, for the latter point, the scholars suggest avoiding individualistic dimensions of place identity, by showing instead how places might be seen as contested arena of collective belonging. Thereby, the concept of place identity is strictly related to the sense of belonging to a place held by individuals and groups (Stedman, 2002), as the physical settings becomes part of the self (Trentelman, 2009). Moreover, by suggesting a discursive approach to the study of place-identity, Dixon and Durrheim (2000) propose to explore the concept as situated in interpersonal conversation, to fulfil social and rhetorical functions. In line with this framework (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000), I adopt the concept of place identity as constructed through the dialogue between people to make sense of place, as I discuss in the course of the next data chapters.

For what concerns the difference between the concept of place attachment and place identity, several scholars have neglected to highlight any differences between the two concepts, and use them interchangeably and synonymously (Brown and Werner, 1985; Stedman, 2002). Some researchers have stated that place attachment is a component of place identity (Lalli, 1992). In other studies (Williams *et al.*, 1992), place attachment has been defined by two sub-dimensions which includes place identity. In addition, some authors mention three dimensions that are defined by the concept of place attachment: place identity, place dependence and lifestyle (Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000). According to Kyle *et al.* (2005) place attachment includes factors such as identity, dependence and social bonds. A further definition highlights that both are parallel dimensions of a supra-ordered concept: 'sense of place' (Hay, 1998; Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Pretty *et al.*, 2003).

This scholarly dispute over conceptual issues is due to the fact that different research has been conducted in different disciplines, adopting different methods of research and perspectives. Therefore, further research is needed to clarify the definitions and the relationship between place identity, attachment and related terms (Lewicka, 2011). As argued by Hernández *et al.* (2007), the overlaps between the concept of place identity and place attachment in the literature, could be attributed to the samples that have been used in most studies: native people, who have lived in the same place for a long time, and who generally reveal similar levels of both affective bonds (Brown *et al.*, 2004; Vidal *et al.*, 2004). Thus, the authors suggest investigating

place identity and attachment in non-native peoples, or individuals with a shorter span of residence because this would permit insight into the complexity of experiences of places, clarifying how attachment to places differ from identification with them. Drawing on the data collected in this research, I discuss the distinctiveness of these two terms in the conclusive Chapter 8.

Furthermore, although, it is widely accepted that places contributes to the development, definition, re-creation, and preservation of self-identity (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983; Lalli, 1992), further investigation is needed in order to form a deeper understanding of the extent to which these processes are subjectively interpreted by different individuals throughout their life span (Rowles, 2005). As such, there is significant difference in the way place attachment is experienced and how this can change over time (Gilleard *et al.*, 2007; Livingstone, 2010). One way to explore how the meaning of places changes during the life stages is to look at the age factor and particularly older age. Therefore, I next illustrate the meaning of attachment and identification to places for an older population, according to the social gerontological perspective.

## **2.3 Affective Bonds with Places in Later Life**

### ***2.3.1 Ageing, places-ties and health***

A growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship to the study of old age emphasize the importance of life-course perspective (Walsh, 2016a; Skinner *et al.*, 2017). Alwin (2012) states that in contemporary study of ageing, there is a little agreement on what 'life-course' is. Seeking for conceptual clarity he defines 'life-course' as: "processes, events and experiences that occur in the biographies of individuals" (p.207). Echoing Elder *et al.* (2003)'s paradigmatic principles of the life course approach, Alwin (2012) highlights the intersection between biography and historical circumstances. In particular, Elder *et al.* (2003) principle of time and place conceives people lives as embedded and shaped by historical times and places they experience over time. On Gardner (2002) work with older Bengali living in London, she argues the importance of life course approach in individuals' relationship with places by writing: "We cannot fully understand people's relationship to place or to movement without reference to time (Gardner, 2002, p. 215). More recent works on ageing (Walsh and Näre, 2016) explicitly refuse to refer to older age as a fixed and biological stage of life, but instead as a process. To highlight this dynamic notion of

older age, the shift to the life course approach is paramount (Näre, 2016). In particular, in Chapter 5 and 6, I adopt a life course approach by highlighting the life experiences of some older Italian migrants interviewed.

In the field of social gerontology, research focuses on the affective bonds that older people establish with their social and physical environment (Lawton and Nahemow, 1973; Rowles, 1978; Rowles, 1983; Gilroy, 2005; Peace *et al.*, 2007). The seminal work of Rowles (1978) emphasized the relationship between older people and their homes, for memory and identity. His work revealed how the place in which older people live often acquires a special emotional significance. This has been given to the feelings associated with places, and invoked by them, as a central aspect of personal biography in later life. Rowles' research with older residents of an Appalachian community highlighted the importance of sense of belonging to processes of self-definition (Rowles, 1983). Drawing on Relph (1976), who referred to the familiarity within a setting, Rowles identified the sense of belonging amongst older adults with the concept of 'insideness'. Firstly, he theorized the 'physical insideness', such as the awareness of the physical details of a place; secondly, he defined the 'social insideness' as the sense of connection to a community; and finally, the concept of 'autobiographical insideness', which is the practise of accumulating experiences in places, that provides a sense of rootedness. He argued that the latter is very important in later life, because it maintains a sense of personal identity and continuity. In this respect, Rowles (1986), through focusing on the relationship between older adults and the environment, highlighted the importance of place memories, in providing meanings and security. Through illustrating the role of home in growing old Rowles (2005), demonstrated how it becomes a stable scenario in everyday life, and the context where many identity-relevant processes take place. I address this theme in Chapter 5, exploring the subjective meaning of home amongst older Italians in Newcastle.

Several scholars built on Rowles' studies (Swenson, 1998; McHugh, 2000; Rosel, 2003), emphasizing the role of places for determining a concept of identity in later life. For instance, McHugh (2000), focusing on the potential of places in articulation the concept of ageing, paid attention to the emplacement of identity within specific communities. Place attachment has been studied in rural communities (Burholt, 2006; Walsh and O'shea, 2008; Walsh *et al.*, 2012). In the study conducted by Burholt (2006) in rural Wales, the dimensions of older people's attachment to places

were: general local satisfaction, historical perspective, aesthetic and emotional components of location, social support, social integration, appropriateness of the environment, and relocation constraints. I address the historical perspective on place attachment in Chapter 7 through oral histories. In the study of rural-dwelling older people, place attachment was evidenced to favour the desire to maintain community capacity despite the changing context (Walsh *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, in the study Burholt *et al.* (2013) it has been shown how place attachment amongst older residents contributed to the (re)production of islanders identity.

Similar studies are noteworthy for their focus on the relational importance of place and homes in the emotional life of older adults (Altman and Low, 1992; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996; Hay, 1998; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Manzo, 2005). Researchers have also demonstrated how private houses owned by older adults are full of greater personal meanings, constituted by objects of affections (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton, 1981; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Rosel, 2003; Sherman and Dacher, 2005).

In particular, with respect to the meaning of home both Swenson (1998) and Rosel (2003), adopted the concept of place attachment to indicate physical and emotional link with the dwelling. In a parallel fashion, Taylor (2001) illustrated how process of identification with and attachment to place hold memories amongst older African-American adults. The life stories she collected reveal how affective bonds with places enable autobiographical memories. Research on places identified how homes in later life have been considered as a locus of negotiation of meanings (Wiles, 2003; Gilroy, 2005). For example, Peace *et al.* (2005b) study of environment and identity in later life, reflected on the individual and collective meanings that older people attribute to places. This study showed how the perception of having enough physical space and personally significant household objects, such as objects of affection and autobiographical memories, contribute to people's quality of life, sense of independence (Peace *et al.*, 2005b). This has been interpreted as helping retain a positive sense of self in later life and reflecting on the past, symbolically represented in certain places and objects within the home (Oswald and Wahl, 2005). In particular, (Hockey *et al.*, 2005) identify the considerable role home plays in containing older people's personal memories of social and individual event; therefore, these historical identities and attachments are comforting during period of loss and deprivation. These studies reveal how the private dwelling can act as a natural repository or

'fitting place' for objects collected, cherished possessions and memorabilia over the course of life and, for this reason, is the most cherished object itself (Sherman and Dacher, 2005). I address this point in Chapter 5, where I highlight the meaning of domestic objects for expressing identities.

These contributions also explore how place-ties are important in determining the extent of and opportunities for health and well-being in later life (Andrews and Kearns, 2005; Lui *et al.*, 2009). Theories of attachment to places highlight how older people with good place-ties are more likely to feel in control, secure, and have a positive sense of self (Golant, 1984; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Reed *et al.*, 1998). Emphasizing the relationship with home and environments (Rowles, 1983; Chaudhury and Rowles, 2005; Peace *et al.*, 2007; Rowles and Bernard, 2013), it has been shown how place attachment in later life helps maintaining a sense of identity, enabling people to draw meanings and facilitate adjustment to the contingencies of ageing (Andrews and Phillips, 2004; Gilroy, 2005; Gilroy, 2008; Wiles *et al.*, 2009). Drawing on a central idea in the gerontological literature that place attachment becomes stronger as people age (Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Wiles, 2005), the work of Phillipson (2007) showed how this is generated by cumulative memories of places. Drawing on this literature, I explore how the sense of attachment to and identification with places is negotiated across private domains, in the population being studied.

Taking an opposite point of view, private domains are not always seen as a space of familiarity and comfort, but also a context for withdrawal, where it is possible to exclude the self from public life (Wilton, 1998; Varley, 2008). In this respect, the attachment of older people to their own dwelling, might risk raising different kinds of issues: for example, leading to a misinterpretation of the relationship older people have with public places. Mansvelt (1997) has explained how this contributes to frame ageing as invisible in a public context, reinforcing a negative stereotypical trope of aging. I addressed this point by adding the following paragraph at section (2.3.1):

As illustrated by the environmental press-competence (Lawton and Nahemow, 1973), older people with functional loss are reluctant to environmental changes. Lawton's ecological model of ageing (EMA) addresses the mutual influential interaction amongst person and social and physical environment (Lawton, 1989). This behavioural framework takes in consideration the relationship between individual

competences and the environmental press. His quality of life model conceived improvement in the environment as having a positive impact on person with major limitation on competencies, such as older people. Places, such as homes have been important in the context of ageing. As illustrated by the concept of residential normalcy (Golant, 2017), cognitive and behavioural factors lead to the relationship between older adults and their environments. According to this residential decision-making framework, older persons achieve *residential normalcy* when they experience residential comfort and residential mastery (Golant, 2014). This feeling might determine the desire to age-in-place, even in case of residential problems. The ability to cope with the adversity of places where older people reside depends on the subjective way in which the problem has been interpreted. In some cases, older people might not be fully aware of the alternative solutions to their problems, and consequently might not take concrete actions to cope with these. Golant (2017) further illustrated that in these cases older people rely on accommodative mind strategy, just by minimizing the problems, rationalizing these or consider the problems not really serious.

House, indeed, play an important role for older people in terms of functional links related to behavioural adaptation and identity (Oswald *et al.*, 2005). The article of Oswald *et al.* (2006) used the term 'perceived housing' to indicate the subjective phenomena of experiences and symbolic representations related to living at home. The scholars indicate 4 domains, such as: housing satisfaction; usability in the home; meaning of home; and housing related control beliefs, that are important to understand perceiving houses in very old age. Data from Swedish, British and German older adults showed that strong bonds to home might contribute to the ability to cope with constraints of ageing, while, on the other hand, might also mitigate against environmental decision like moving in a better house.

A humanistic geography of ageing focused as well on the relationship between older people and environment (Rowles, 1978), informed by phenomenological approaches. His contribution stresses the role of an active relationship between older persons and places. Place attachment emerged through artefacts and memory. Rowles and Watkins (2003) illustrated the way in which a space had been transformed into a home, by the need to reshape the habits tied to the old home into the new. The residential life-course trajectory (Rowles, 2008) emphasized how the role of the personal narrative of places, constructed across multiple homes over time. His works

continues with a more recent turn to ways in which such knowledge can inform interventions for older adults and places in need of help (Rowles and Bernard, 2013).

Cutchin (2001) had drawn on John Dewey's pragmatism to define the interconnected nature of person-place relationship, focusing on the connection between the aging-in-place and older people migration decision-making. The concept of 'place integration' (Cutchin, 2001) refers to the ability to reintegrate place in a meaningful way and to possibility to attach new values to places in later life. In other words, the place integration perspective provides a way to address the ongoing transaction of older people and place, focusing on the active process that constitute place attachment. The scholar also drawn on Bordieu to highlight the importance of habits to understand relocation, transition and creative place making (Cutchin, 2007). Looking at instabilities, transition and negotiation, (Cutchin, 2017) represent a continuation of humanistic perspectives, as providing a better understanding of that active and dynamic relationship between older people and places in the everyday life. This literature suggests thinking at place attachment as a dynamic and active process, as the relationship and places where to 'feel home' change over time. In Chapter 6, I adopt Cutchin's concept of transition (2017), to explore how older Italians in Newcastle have interpreted in later life the phase of adjustment due the relocation after migration.

In this section, I highlighted key themes in the field of social gerontology that illustrated the meaning of places amongst an older population. Overall, there is broad agreement that sense of attachment and identification with places are conditions for a positive experience of ageing; some meaningful places, such as dwellings or communities, become the locus of attachment, belonging and identity in later life. However, sense of attachment to places has not been associated only to the physical aspect of the places, but also to the social aspects of the environment, incorporating communities (Wahl and Weisman, 2003; Peace *et al.*, 2007), as I illustrate further in the following section.

### *2.3.2 Identification with neighborhoods and communities*

Not only the physical aspect of the environment contributes to the sense of attachment to places, but the social aspect of it also plays a significant role in this regard. For example, Phillipson (2001) showed the importance of social relationships in providing support mechanisms amongst widows and single people in urban



communities. Bernard *et al.* (2001) highlighted the characteristics of some urban places, such as churches or clubs, for offering opportunities for older people to establish relationships with members of their own cultural community. In particular, the sense of attachment to the neighbourhood and identification with the areas where older people live, were also highlighted in the case of deprived areas (Scharf *et al.*, 2002). That is to say, it is not only the physical aspects of the environment (for instance, in terms of resources, amenities, etc.), which shape a sense of attachment to inhabited places but also the relational importance of places amongst older people.

Further research (Phillipson, 2004) has raised awareness about the heterogeneity of the population, also in respect to the kind of engagements established with places, neighbourhoods and communities. Phillipson (2007) focuses on belonging and identity in later life and emphasized the importance of community attachment. He illustrated how the effects of globalization introduced a complexity that impacts on the life of older people at a local level. On the one hand, changes in physical and social aspect of the environments (neighbourhood, urban areas) generate a sense of loss of past imaginary in the sense of community that older people might have experienced in their life. On the other hand, this pertains to a more mobile conception of ageing. The latter, with the rise of transnational lifestyles and communities, poses new questions about older people's sense of belonging and identity that I address in the following section.

In this respect, it worth noting that older people remain connected to their locality in different ways: there is a diversity of social participation and the need for opportunities for social interaction (Buffel *et al.*, 2012). This was illustrated in a participatory study that aimed to promote neighbourhood cohesion in the city of Bruges (Buffel *et al.*, 2012). This research concluded that older people's sense of attachment to places, not only relates to the physical aspects of places, but also to the relationship established with people living in these places.

To sum up, in this section I illustrated how older people articulate the affective relationship established with places through physical and social aspects of the environment. Drawing on this literature, I explore how the sense of attachment to and identification with places is negotiated across private and public domains, in the

population being studied, as one of the objective of this research, and explored in details in Chapter 5 and 6.

### *2.3.3 Qualitative approach on the study of places in gerontology*

In social gerontology, the conceptual difference between 'space' and 'place', as explained in the introduction to this chapter, derives from the dichotomy between research focused at the macro- and micro-scale. On the one hand, research at the macro-scale is mainly conducted using quantitative approaches and has adopted a conception of 'space' in order to understand population ageing, distribution and movements of older people in empiricist and positivist terms (Oswald *et al.*, 2005). On the other hand, research at the micro-scale, referring to the concept of 'place', seeks to understand the relationship between older adults and their social and physical environments, focusing on emplacement, emotion, image, and body. The latter perspective, as highlighted by Andrews *et al.* (2009) study of 'place', emphasizes the ethnographic approach and privileges qualitative, biographical and narrative inquiry. Moreover, a focus on cultural and historical factors might be best suited to gain a more complex understanding of ageing (Andrews *et al.*, 2009).

The relationship that older people establish with places has been investigated both within geographical (Andrews and Phillips, 2004) and environmental gerontology (Wahl and Weisman, 2003) literature. While the latter is theoretically anchored to environmental psychology, the former is linked to human geography (Andrews *et al.*, 2013). A clearer overview of the research trends within the two disciplines can be found in Andrews *et al.* (2009), where similarities and differences are highlighted. The shared interest of both fields of study is a focus on the relationship between people and places.

Environmental gerontology has been more interested in exploring the challenges that older adults face, due to their physical and mental decline over time (Andrews *et al.*, 2013). Arguing that people reduce their use of space in later life, scholars in this field mainly sought to measure discrete and objective aspects of the physical environments – as well as personal characteristics (Oswald and Wahl, 2005) – with the purpose of improving the functional use of the living space to promote better health outcomes for older occupants. By contrast, in geographical gerontology, scholars have sought to understand how older adults experience place – including interactions, meanings and values associated with places – focusing on the centrality

of subjectivity and autobiographical accounts (Rowles, 1983; Peace *et al.*, 2005a). It is almost certainly the case that this distinction between environmental and geographical gerontology is not exhaustive. The framework presented is artificial constructed for the sake of clarity. I should also note that the works cited in each discipline do not focus only on the area with which I have associated them. On the contrary, there are overlaps between geographical and environmental gerontology literature and this is increasingly converging.' However, within the discipline of geographical gerontology, an increasing interest emerged around older people's everyday lives, by adopting a conceptual framework that concerns 'place' and its effects on health outcomes (Andrews *et al.*, 2007). I situate my research in line with the above mentioned geographical gerontology perspective, adopting the same theorization around the concept of 'place', while highlighting the strength of qualitative methodology that I discuss in Chapter 3. I now move on to consider how mobility and migration impact on the meanings of places in later life. To do so, I highlight a gap in the literature on social gerontology related to the affective bonds people hold with places.

#### *2.3.4 Research gap: place attachment among older post-retirement migrants.*

In social gerontology, the research interest on older migrants was initiated through the study of post-retirement migration. This refers to patterns of migration of older adults around or post-retirement (Bures, 1997; Gustafson, 2001b; Longino, 2001; Sunil *et al.*, 2007; Newbold, 2008), even if exclusively within the same country. Works in this vein include the study of the seasonal migration of older people who are termed 'snowbirds' in the United States (McHugh, 1996) and 'retirees' in Europe (Huber and Reilly, 2004), who live circular and pendular lifestyles (Gustafson, 2001b). Contributions such as these generate a heightened interest in the relationship established between older people and places, having highlighted the importance of the emplacement: effects of places and environments on health outcomes (Gustafson, 2001b, pp. 391-392).

In particular, the emphasis on affective bonds with places has been addressed by Gustafson (2001b), who draws attention to the various degrees of attachment and transnational lifestyles that differently characterize the post retirement migrant population. This diversity has been acknowledged as particularly important to investigate, since it reveals the subjective perspective on meanings and experiences of older age. This study focused attention on mobility and globalization, and revealed

that older retirement migrants develop different place ties, such as place attachment, in multiple locations and in different ways (Gustafson, 2001b). Firstly, it showed that some older people developed strong and multiple attachments to places. These older adults were characterized by frequent mobility and they focused on differences between places, revealing a high degree of cultural adaptation amongst different localities. Secondly, some of the older retirement migrants combined modest ideals of mobility, establishing strong attachments to places, despite these being based on similarities between locations, and showing a low degree of cultural adaptation. Finally, a third characterization pertained to those who might be defined as 'routinized sojourning'. These groups of retired migrants experience a transnational lifestyle, characterized by little or no multiple attachments (Gustafson, 2001b). This study is important for my research agenda, as it shows that mobility and attachment to places are not contradictory phenomena, but that there are several different ways to interpret the relationship between these two concepts.

Thus, studies such as these may raise questions on the role of places and mobility between different locations in an ageing migrant population. For instance, being specifically focused on the mobility between different homes, the importance of family ties upon the decision of moving location has also been highlighted by Stoller and Longino (2001). In this respect, Hays (2002) seeks to explain factors driving the decision process to move location in later life. She develops a model for explaining push and pull factors of migration, motivations, and behavioural outcomes of older people around retirement. This same theme was also articulated by Al-Sharmani (2006), and both studies are attempts to identify the meanings of places and the sense of agency and empower derived in later life through them. Consequentially, one of the dominant research themes concerned with how sense of attachment to places in later life changed the conceptualization of ageing. These studies improved understandings of older age and the decision to move home amongst seasonal migrant retirees, acknowledging the possibility of multiple attachments to places. However, place-ties experienced by long-term older migrants has been a largely neglected area of research.

Asserting the importance of places for the development of identity and attachment in later life from a post-retirement perspective, this is assumed to be relevant for health and quality of life as people age. However, despite the attention paid to the concept of attachment to place (and to multiple places), research in this area is almost

exclusively focused on post-retirement migration. In line with this trend, I suggest the need for further research on the affective bonds with places from the perspective of those who are not ageing in places in the traditional sense. This refers to older migrants who have not been growing older in their own homes, dwellings, or communities for all their life. This is in line with some other scholars' perspective. For example, acknowledging the importance of shifting the research agenda on place attachment to older migrants, Torres (2002) provided some preliminary recommendations on the study migration in the context of older age. She pointed out at the importance of considering the ethnic and cultural background of older migrants and the age of arrival of these people, given different kinds of issues faced by the ones who are in the process of growing old as migrants in different cultural contexts. She remarked that migrating as an older adult presents different challenges compared to the ones who grow old as migrants (Torres, 2002). Moreover, in Torres (2006) expanded on this theme, by adding that those who moved in early age, have been 'othered' as ethnically different, while those who migrated as older adults have been 'othered' on the basis of their older age. Therefore, to grasp the complexity of ageing in the context of migration, there is a need to focus on the perspectives of long-term migrants on the meanings they associate with and experiences of ageing and older age (Torres, 2006). As such, Andrews *et al.* (2007) claimed that:

'Some of the most powerful contributions to understanding attachment to place and aging in place have to come from exploring the perspectives of those who are NOT ageing in place, in the traditional sense, remaining in a home or community in which they have dwelt all their lives, reflecting the growing mobility of people both in old age and before old age' (Andrews *et al.*, 2007, p. 158).

Therefore, scholars have argued that little is known about the ways in which places might be experienced and negotiated by people who are ageing and live away from their home countries. Highlighting a gap in the literature, this dissertation focuses on the ways in which places might be experienced and negotiated by people who are ageing and live away from their home countries. In the following section, I detail how the literature on ageing in the context of migration, has shifted perspective to focus on the experience of migration according to long-term migrants' point of views.

## 2.4 Ageing and Migration

Despite the fact that over past decades older migrants have been acknowledged as a substantial component of the ageing population (Warnes *et al.*, 2004; Warnes and Williams, 2006), the intersection between ageing and migration remains a fairly unexplored field of inquiry (Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015; Zubair and Norris, 2015; Torres and Karl, 2016). Only in recent years have older migrants come to the fore of research attention, although they still remain at the margins of the disciplines of social gerontology and migration studies (Torres and Karl, 2016).

The following section of this Chapter reviews the literature on social gerontology, illustrating how the academic debate on research on ageing migrants has followed different trends in the last few decades. In doing so, I firstly show how early research attention to older migrants pertained to health and social problems. Secondly, moving beyond stereotypical images of older migrants, I illustrate attempts in the research to raise awareness of the diversity of the older migrant population. Currently, it is well established that one of the aspects that enhances cultural diversity within groups of older migrants is their transnational lifestyle and the sense of belonging to transnational communities. Therefore, recently scholars in social gerontology have focused attention on the relationship established between places and the people who inhabit these places. The review of literature presented in this chapter is summarized in Table 1. This illustrates the research trends (including themes, findings and limitations) in the last few decades.

Research Trends	1970-1990	2000-2004	2004-2015	On-going research
Themes	Family structures Health Financial Issues	Social Problems: Health and Social Exclusion	Heterogeneity Within	Developing intersectionality Rethinking to ethnicity
Findings	Research for health sectors and social services.  Highlighting inequalities, disadvantages and discrimination.	Collecting experiences of older migrants Problems migrants face: Poor health; Loneliness; Illiteracy; Isolation; Low economic status; Social exclusion;	Typology developed: places of provenience reasons for migrating socio-economic condition Focus on disadvantages: and opportunities. Transnationality and movements.	How ethnicity intersect with class; gender sexuality Moving from essentialist to social constructionist perspective on ethnicity. Transnational communities, identities, attachment to places age.
Limitations	National and community-based surveys, large dataset. No differences amongst ethnic minority groups.	Older migrant as a social problem: 'Stereotypical assumptions tend to othering elderly immigrants.' Overgeneralization and lack of diversity within the group.	Typology non representative of all older migrants.  Impossibility of reducing people into categories, or one category at the time.	

Table 1 *Dominant themes in Social Gerontology on Ageing and Migration (Source: Author, 2018)*

#### 2.4.1 Older migrants as a social problem: health and inequalities

A recent article (Phillipson, 2015) reviewed the main studies carried out in the 1970s, thanks to national surveys developed from the 1990s. These descriptive studies, focused on community-based surveys, were interested in family structures and financial issues that influenced health and access to services. This research interest was stimulated by the arrivals of the post-Second World War generation of migrants, and were addressed to health sectors and social services (Fennell *et al.*, 1988), highlighting disadvantages and discrimination that older migrants have experienced by having a minority ethnic background (Phillipson, 2015). Drawing attention to the increasing number of older migrants that pose challenges to social care practitioners and policy makers, several studies focused on mental and physical health and well-being, that is applicable to the process of ageing in the context of migration. Therefore, it was suggested investigating the geographical distribution of minority groups to better meet the challenges of the services.

Consequentially, scholars have considered the implications of the increasing number of older migrants for social care and policy makers -i.e., the theoretically driven contribution of Blakemore (1999). Studies on patterns of migration were concerned with the effect of distance on kinship cohesiveness over time (Lin and Rogerson, 1995; Shelton and Grundy, 2000), implications of mobility and distance on family bonds and interactions amongst family members (Joseph and Hallman, 1998; Glaser and Tomassini, 2000). However, these studies were conducted with large datasets, suggesting further research to adopt a more localized and qualitative approach to better understand the migration processes of older people (Fokkema and Van Wissen, 1997).

Subsequently, focusing on the experiences of older migrants, research included attempts to stimulate a dialogue between ageing and migration, raising awareness of the problems that older migrants might face, such as isolation (Treas and Mazumdar, 2002; Victor *et al.*, 2012), the risk of inequalities and social exclusion (Scharf *et al.*, 2002; Warnes *et al.*, 2004; Warnes and Williams, 2006). According to the study of Scharf *et al.* (2002), constituted by interviews with 600 older migrants in different cities in the UK – such as Liverpool, London and Manchester – the biggest challenge that older migrants faced were chronic poverty, loneliness and poor housing. This research concluded by saying that older Somali and Pakistani migrants, due to their low economic status, experienced a progressive reduction of engagement in social activities and limitations in their access to essentials, such as food. In a similar fashion, Gardner (2006) pointed out the loneliness and poverty of older women from a Bengali background in London in her Bethnal Green study. These women, acting as their husbands' carers, or widows, or not supported by their family, were constrained to their small flats, fearing racist attacks. A very similar situation was described by Phillipson *et al.* (2003) in their study of middle-aged Bangladeshi women.

In Nazroo (2003) work, the diverse social economic characteristics that marked inequalities amongst older migrants, was raised as a problem to be addressed by care planners and service providers. Migration had an impact on friendship and family amongst the four ethnic groups in the study: Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, and White. Since migration was interpreted as a loss of friendship from the country of origin, the importance of family ties in these groups of people increased. Similarly, Thompson and Bauer (2003) highlighted the sense of loss due to the experience of



migration, amongst Jamaican groups of people in Britain and North America. According to these scholars, grief arising from migration was expressed in feelings of being isolated.

In the European context, Warnes *et al.* (2004) illustrated how the number of older migrants is doomed to increase during the coming decades, having highlighted disadvantages older migrants come to face in growing old in the context of migration. These scholars pointed out the risk of exclusion faced by older migrants, due to obstacles for interacting with social policies and experienced inequalities, to a great or lesser extent influenced by living in a foreign environment. Despite all the studies reported above showing that the intersection between ageing and migration has received progressively more attention, these have contributed to re-iterating the dominant trope of the vulnerability of older migrants. I describe the main points of this academic debate in the next section.

#### *2.4.2 Double jeopardy, 'othering elderly migrants' and the vulnerability trope*

The 'double jeopardy' trope refers to the disadvantages of being both an older adults and a person with a different ethnicity and / or having a migrant background<sup>13</sup>. This expression refers to a condition of potential vulnerability, commonly attributed to older migrants in ageing research studies and mainly due to the fact of their growing older in a foreign environment (Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015), as I address on Chapter 4. However, problematizing the gerontological construction of ageing migrants Torres (2006) criticized previous research as taking for granted an over-generalization of experiences and vulnerable conditions in later life. Reviewing the literature on older migrant in Sweden, Torres argued that previous research on the topic framed older migrants with some specific characteristics: living in poorer health condition; having lower income and low educational levels; having low life expectation and aspirations; speaking the language of the host country poorly; being socially isolated from family members; and possessing small social networks. These studies, therefore, concluded by saying that older migrants are more likely to feel lonely and encounter difficulties in accessing health and social care (Torres, 2006). However, according to Torres' perspective, this led to: overgeneralization of the

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<sup>13</sup> I do acknowledge that this expression has been also adopted to define older people in different contexts (i.e. rural dwelling older adults, see Walsh, K. and O'shea, E. (2008) 'Responding to rural social care needs: older people empowering themselves, others and their community', *Health & Place*, 14(4), pp. 795-805, Walsh, K., O'Shea, E., Scharf, T. and Murray, M. (2012) 'Ageing in changing community contexts: Cross-border perspectives from rural Ireland and Northern Ireland', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 28(4), pp. 347-357.)

people experiences; risk of seeing the migrant population as a homogenous category; and an emphasis on older migrant's vulnerable condition and their disadvantages. Illustrating the risks and weaknesses of the way older migrants were framed in the gerontological field, she provided an account of how research on ageing and migration represented older migrants with anecdotal and stereotyped inferences, defined as a distinctive social category who are a 'challenge for society', and often overestimating their problems (Torres, 2006).

Furthermore, this misinterpretation led to the interventions of policy makers and planners who might determine 'special needs' for older migrants (Torres, 2006). In other words, the paper warned gerontological scholars that in 'othering elderly immigrants' (Torres, 2006, p. 1351), ran the risk of generating a disparity between what it is assumed to be a problem and the reality of their living conditions<sup>14</sup>. As a consequence, the vulnerability trope has been challenged by several scholars in migration and ageing studies (Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015; Zubair and Norris, 2015; King *et al.*, 2017).

Arguing that it is not possible to speak about migrants as a single, homogenous group, given the diversity in the background and the reasons for migration, Torres (2006) pointed out that not all migrants are the same. She suggested considering the age in which some have migrated, their socio-economic background, and that a low level of education does not necessary mean a lower social status in the country of origin (Torres, 2006, p. 1344). The theme of diversity was strongly embedded in this theoretical debate, and this enabled me to frame the overall argument of Chapter 4. For example, the study of Warnes *et al.* (1999) highlighted that one of the main differences amongst migrants is their socio-economic status, and the enhanced welfare and well-being of some wealthy expatriates and post-retirement migrants in Europe. Warnes *et al.* (2004) focused on international migration within Europe, identified differences amongst older migrants, formulating a typology of older adults

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<sup>14</sup>Torres' (2006) argument reflected the general critical turn in social gerontology that moves beyond the idea of considering later life with stereotyped images of vulnerability, disengagement, and withdrawal from society (Fennell, G., Phillipson, C. and Evers, H. (1988) *The sociology of old age*. Open University, Holstein, M.B., Waymack, M. and Parks, J.A. (2010) *Ethics, aging, and society: The critical turn*. Springer publishing company.) fragility, illness, disability (Gooberman-Hill, R., Ayis, S. and Ebrahim, S. (2003) 'Understanding long-standing illness among older people', *Social science & medicine*, 56(12), pp. 2555-2564.). This research trend is not based on pessimistic and problem-focused position on ageing, assuming instead that the articulation of ageing is highly contextual – based on the context in which the decline is experienced (see Grenier, A.M. (2005) 'The contextual and social locations of older women's experiences of disability and decline', *Journal of Aging Studies*, 19(2), pp. 131-146.)-.

with a migrant background. This study suggested that diversity amongst migration groups depended on: places of provenance (within or outside Europe); reason for migration (labour migration or family reunion); and socio-economic condition, ranging for the very affluent to the more deprived groups (Warnes *et al.*, 2004). Moreover, further studies on the relationship between older migrants and places have widely accepted that one of the aspects that might enhance the diversity within the groups of older migrants, is the experience of growing older in a transnational social field (Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015), as I elaborate below.

#### 2.4.3 Transnationalism

In social gerontology, research attention on transnationality came to the fore with the study undertaken by the cultural anthropologist Schiller *et al.* (1992), which explored the process by which migrants, having continuous contacts across nations, build social fields both in their country of origin and their country of settlement. In respect to long-term migrants, Levitt (2001) has highlighted the condition of transnationality of some who remain active in their places of origin, while being incorporated into the receiving society (Levitt, 2001).

Warnes and Williams (2006) illustrated the advantages that some groups of people in Europe – labour, as well as retired migrants – experience from having a transnational lifestyle and multiple affiliated residences. Drawing on a study of Turkish migrants in Belgium, the research showed that these group of people benefit from having access to both the lower living cost of the country of origin and the health system of the country of residence. Subsequently, the study of Katz and Mc Hugh, (2009) drew attention to transnational lifestyles of older people. Hence, Torres and Karl (2016), showed how

‘social relations, networks, social support and care in older age can no longer be solely studied from the perspective of national parameters because they stretch across diverse national societies or embedded in a broader context of migration’ (Torres and Karl, 2016, p. 5).

In Torres (2013), there is a reflection on transnationalism which differs from migration, and transnational ways of living in older age as influenced by more than one culture at the time. Drawing on transnationalist theorists (Portes, 1999; Vertovec, 1999), Torres defines the importance of research on transnationality, as the response of an intense cross-border activity and long-distance mobility, from which older

migrants have long been ignored. However, as argued by Torres (2013), not all older migrants adopt a transnational lifestyle, by maintaining contacts with different context, for example, having two or more houses – in the country of origin and in the one of residence – speaking two languages, and having different social contacts. Torres (2013) brought the diversity of older migrants to the attention of scholar of aging and older age, underlining the difference between older migrants and older trans-migrants. She asserts that these older people's transnational ties have to be taken into account, as experiencing more than one culture at a time, they are more influenced by the challenge of being-in-between and experience the hybridity of cultures in older age. Hence, these transnational ties might shape the differences between values and degree of integration of both cultures and societies, by taking as example the relationship older migrants maintain with their families and their intergenerational relationships. I address this theme in Chapter 4. As it is clear from this literature, transnationality might define the condition of some older migrants who are not aging in place in the traditional sense. Therefore, a focus on transnationality enables a better understanding of mobility – back and forth across national boundaries of older people – but also of the relationship and social fields built over time, as I explore in Chapter 5. Thus, research attention on transnational lifestyles might inform the sense of attachment to places, as I consider next.

#### *2.4.4 Older migrants' place attachment*

Works on older migrants' place attachment include the research of Buffel *et al.* (2011), that describes the experiences of places amongst older Somali and Pakistani adults in Manchester, together with the perspectives of older Moroccan and Turkish older migrants in Brussels. Adopting a qualitative approach, they focused on the importance of the sense of attachment and identification with the neighbourhood. Underpinning the cultural meanings of the sense of home associated with the neighbourhood, this work showed that the social aspects of the environment (having supportive and trustful neighbourhood) influenced the decision of older migrants to move or not in those areas of Brussels. The study suggested that, in particular, the proximity to members of the same cultural community, as well as ethnic amenities, facilitate place attachment amongst older migrants – highlighting the importance of social networks. Moreover, drawing on Becker (2003), Buffel *et al.* (2012) pointed out the difficulty of creating a sense of home in the precarious conditions that older migrants experience due to their living arrangements (Buffel *et al.*, 2014). Further

investigation is needed to explore individual perceptions of places, which migrants identify as being significant for them to reconstruct a sense of belonging and identity.

Furthermore, older migrants' place attachment might shape their conceptualization of ageing and play a role in their decisions of which places they age in. A recent contribution on ageing migrants' and places (Phillipson, 2015) suggests looking at the way older migrants articulate the relationship established with places – which includes movements across the nations, the maintenance of transnational ties, relationship built with others, the nature of communities, and how these change over time as people move through their life course – that might help understand the ways in which migration impacts on ageing in different social and cultural contexts. According to Torres and Karl (2016), who identified some research strands in the literature on migration at the intersection with ageing, one of these refers to migrants lifestyles that focused on international retirement migration (IRM), such as post-retirement migrants, i.e., those who migrate from Northern European to South European countries (Božić, 2006; Casado-Díaz, 2006), and the alternatives that migrants consider as they age in a foreign country. As illustrated in Chapter 1, these are: returning to their home countries, staying in their host countries or establishing residence on both (Razum *et al.*, 2005; Bolzman *et al.*, 2006; Ganga, 2006; Klinthäll, 2006; Rodríguez and Egea, 2006; Barrett and Mosca, 2013; Baykara-Krumme, 2013; Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015; Zontini, 2015; Baykara-Krumme and Platt, 2016; Torres and Karl, 2016).

This research trend highlighted the differences of older people's lifestyles – such as retired labour migrants, international retirement migration, and older people left behind while younger generation migrate for work – and the effects these choices have on health and well-being (Torres and Karl, 2016). One example of research that aims to evaluate the life satisfaction of older migrants is the one conducted by Baykara-Krumme and Platt (2016). They compared responses by older Turkish migrants in Germany, with return migrants or non-migrants. They found that returnees were significantly less satisfied than migrants; and that stayers were less satisfied than both migrants and returnees. Although this study appears important in having highlighted how migration might have had an impact on well-being and life satisfaction, place attachment was not taken in consideration as a factor that might shape the decision of both staying or relocating elsewhere after retirement.

In order to define differences amongst older migrants, King *et al.* (2017) proposed a typology of older migrants that includes: older people left behind by migration of their children, called the 'zero generation'; older family-joining migrants, often their children migrated for career, lifestyle, marriage abroad; affluent international retirement migrants; older economic migrants; older return migrants; and ageing-in-place migrants (King *et al.*, 2017). The authors demonstrate how these categories overlap and that often older migrants decide to relocate somewhere else to be with their children, or to 'return back' to their country of origin when approaching retirement.

In sum, these contributions highlighted a range of diversities that challenges the assumption of migrants' cultural homogeneity. The meanings that particular places might hold for ageing migrants suggest that older migrants' attachment and identification with places are important issues to be explored, as they contribute to determining positive experiences of ageing. Moreover, as highlighted in Chapter 1, these affective bonds with places might shape the decision of 'age-in-place' in the context of migration, return to the country of origin or relocating elsewhere. Drawing on these studies, I suggest considering the relationship with 'home', abroad or a transnational mix, as having an impact on vulnerability or positive ageing and well-being in later life. I argue that one way of exploring the concept of home and the affective bonds with places amongst older migrants is through material culture, as I discuss in the following section.

## **2.5 Material Culture Perspective**

As previously mentioned, within social gerontology it is widely accepted that the meaning of home is a central aspect of personal biography in later life (Rowles, 1978; Rowles, 1983; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Gilroy, 2005; Peace *et al.*, 2005b; Wiles *et al.*, 2009). A large body of research shows how personalization of private dwellings contribute to older adults' sense of continuity and identity, independence and quality of life (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton, 1981; Sherman and Dacher, 2005; Gilroy, 2008). Moreover, it is well established that biographical objects acquire heightened meanings in later life, since these are cherished when narrating biographies (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton, 1981; Hockey *et al.*, 2005).

In a parallel fashion, this section illustrates the meaning of home through a material culture lens: a discipline that investigates the manner in which people think of

themselves or their life through the medium of different kinds of 'things' (Miller, 1987). Within this discipline, material objects – their layout and organization in personal spaces, as well as embodied practices – play an important role in the practical and emotional life of homeowners (Miller, 1987; Steiner, 2001; Tilley, 2006; Miller, 2008a). This is a perspective that I adopted, as it allowed me to add an enriching element to the debate on affective bonds with places and later life from a migrants' perspective, as I explore in Chapter 5 and 6.

Studies in material culture have shown how material forms, like houses and social spaces, shape human interaction (Tilley, 2006). Many scholars in this discipline have highlighted how individuals imbue material objects with values, significance and meanings (Steiner, 2001). Some scholars, stating that the house can influence the ways people mentally order and understand the world (Morton, 2007), have shown how people express the self through objects and artefacts in the domestic environment (Miller, 2008a).

Within this domain, scholars have paid attention to artefacts in the domestic sphere to better understand intimate aspects of everyday life, as the best example of appropriation of place and personalization of environments. In material culture studies, Hoskins (2006) conceptualizes biographical objects as useful to mediate between past and present. She asserts that 'people who surrounds themselves with biographical objects do so to develop their personalities and reflect on them, (...) use them as part of a narrative process of self-definition' Hoskins (2006, p. 78). Moreover, in Miller (2008a) there are several examples of the ways people express themselves through the objects in their domestic sphere, that have been accumulated gradually through the course of their life. In particular, Miller's theoretical perspective derives from a dialectical approach,

'in which material objects are viewed as integral and inseparable aspect of all relationship' (Miller, 2008a, p. 286).

In his research conducted on several houses in one street of South London, household material culture are presented by participants to construct a narrative, interwoven in the biographies of people. Miller's idea is to focus on the relationship people have with domestic possessions that informs the one they have between themselves and others (Miller, 2008a). Thus, this discipline stresses the value of understanding the ways people express the self through the medium of objects in the

domestic sphere, illustrating how material culture may be seen as a tools to mediate who we are, for ourselves and for others (Belk, 2009).

Material culture studies highlights how material objects provide the 'state of feeling at home' (Miller, 2002). With this expression, Miller identifies the practices of 'accommodating' things in the domestic environment for the 'accommodation' of the self that is useful to feel in peace in one place. This draws attention to what the German philosopher Heidegger defined as 'building as dwelling' (Heidegger, 1971) referring to the construction and cultivation that occurs in the act of being (dwelling). The 'home-making practice' acknowledges the significant role of materiality in cultural contexts (Miller, 1987; Douglas, 1991), and refers to activities that enable a house to be identified as a home (Dant, 1999). This includes utilization, reutilization and domestication of things (Kopytoff, 1986), which validates the idea that people use objects to mark a sense of belonging and materialize identity (Bourdieu, 1979)<sup>15</sup>. This is especially the case for migrant groups.

In fact, in the context of migration, a large body of research acknowledges the importance of material culture on the 'sense of home', referring to a sense of identification and belonging amongst a migrant population (Basu, 2004; Basu and Coleman, 2008; Miller, 2008b). Material culture and home-making practices have been consistently explored through ethnographic research in migratory settings and groups, and also in the literature about transnational mobilities. For example, Rapport and Dawson (1998) have argued for the importance of the 'home' to people in migration, as a site where there are fewer constraints when compared to the public sphere. Focusing on the tangible aspects of the home, as well as home-making practices, attention has been paid to the materiality of migration, such as: transitional objects and memorabilia (Parkin, 1999) in which to inscribe personal biographies in forced migration, objects transported from the country of origin to the new dwelling (Morley, 2000; Burrell, 2008; Kaiser, 2008), photographs (Tolia-Kelly, 2004). These material possessions have been defined as tangible locus where to inscribe a sense of personal identity for the future continuity after migration (Parkin, 1999; Basu and Coleman, 2008; Miller, 2008b). Studies on the sentiment of loss resulting from

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<sup>15</sup> Theoretical discussion on the implications of the objects and the subjective worlds within a culture can refer to the concept of habitus, as theorized by the French social anthropologist Bourdieu, P. (2017) 'Habitus', in *Habitus: A sense of place*. Routledge, pp. 59-66. He refers to embodied tendencies, culturally defined and shared by a group of people. Some of these scholars in material culture studies have considered artefacts and house layout reveals the sense of identity among the one who share the habitus.



migration focused on materiality, has emphasized past memories and relations (Morley, 2000; Miller, 2008b). Moreover, there is a relatively large amount of recent work stressing the importance of these practices for migrant populations, since these groups of people are often involved in creating, changing, and moving homes (Al-Ali and Koser, 2003; Al-Sharmani, 2006).

In the previous literature on migration, material culture that can represent memories or events and the practice of accumulating experience in place, or attributing new spaces for objects – such as home-making practices of interior decoration (Vilar Rosales, 2009) or furnishing (Giorgi and Fasulo, 2013) – has been described as sustaining process of adjustment and re-establishing sense of identity among a migrant population. This can provide a coping strategy to deal with the sense of loss derived from the process of migration (Harbottle, 1996; Morley, 2000).

In particular, home-making practices were found to sustain participants' identification with the cultural and geography of their country of origin in later life (Tolia-Kelly, 2004). Material culture and migration have been discussed in Tolia-Kelly (2004)'s work about South Asian women living in London. She examined how visual and material culture in the new home, acted as landscapes of tradition, heritage and cultural identity. Moreover, these objects were important for individual and personal biographies, but are also situated within a collective sense of identity. Hence, connection to past places, through material culture in the domestic sphere that constitute re-memory, became nodes of connection within networks of people, and the collective sense of identity and citizenship (Tolia-Kelly, 2004).

In this respect, Walsh (2006), in her ethnography of ordinary domestic material culture in British expatriate homes in Dubai, highlights the relevance of home-making practices for the participants in her study. She argues that the desire for attachment or 'grounded belonging' (Walsh 2006) is even more pronounced in a migrant population. Moreover, the work of Vilar Rosales (2009), based on a group of Goan Brahmin families in Mozambique that experienced a forced exodus to Portugal, shows the importance of interior decorations for the appropriation of the new domestic spaces. Focused on a past colonial context, the latter study highlights the role of the objects that travelled with the families from Goa and were introduced in Mozambique, to describe the position and integration of the families in new places of residence. Arguments emerging from these studies hint at the importance of

materiality of things for people in migration. Giorgi and Fasulo (2013), drawing on an ethnographic study of Moroccan households in Rome, highlighted how the experience of migration is deeply intertwined with the physical aspects of home. The authors pointed out that

‘without a place to display the breadth of one’s cultural inheritance [...] the personal identity shrinks down to that of a person who ‘walks’, reduced a few items in a bag’ (Giorgi and Fasulo, 2013, p. 126).

Similarly, Savaş (2014), exploring the experiences of Turkish migrants relocated to Vienna, writes:

‘It’s partially the loss of objects that tells people that they live in a foreign environment, that they are displaced or even misplaced and that they are no longer at home. It’s partially the absence or presence of objects that shows people where they belong’ (Savaş, 2014, p. 189).

Thus, according to contributions at the intersection between material culture and migration studies, private dwellings – the material possession within them, as well as embodied practices – should be addressed as meaningful and expressive sites for understanding processes of negotiation and reconstruction of place-ties. As such, I look at the meaning and significance of ‘home’, including ‘home-making practices’ and ‘sense of home’, from the perspective of an older Italian migrant population. However, an interesting contribution on the role of material culture on domestic sites derives from the work of Walsh (2016b) who reflects on older migrants’ active role in the construction of home, by symbols and material practices. The author stresses the importance of materiality as useful tool in understanding belonging. As such, she explores the souvenirs and transnational identities of English return migrants, by illustrating the case of Jane, who lived in Hong Kong. This participant underlined the differences between attachment and feeling home, by stating that being surrounded by material stuff does not necessary mean to be able to re-create a sense of home. This contribution, thus, warns us to not misinterpret the power of things.

I address this theme in Chapter 5, illustrating how participants maintained and reproduced cultural habits and aesthetics through home-making practices, and highlighting their agency in re-creating a domestic environment in their adoptive land with elements of their country of origin. This helps to understand how the material culture of private dwellings and their possessions have been felt and experienced by

the participants in my study, particularly in later life many years after the process of migration.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, firstly, I illustrated the thematic foundation of this research project that, adopting a multidisciplinary approach to the concept of place, aims to understand the affective bonds with places inhabited amongst an older Italian migrant's population in Newcastle. Secondly, I highlighted key themes in the field of social gerontology that illustrated the meanings of places amongst an older population. Thus, I considered feelings associated with places, and invoked by them, as a central aspect of personal biography in later life. Finally, I illustrated academic debates influenced further research on older migrants seeking to unpack the diversity within these populations. In the next data chapters, I draw on transnationality, home making practices, social memories and objects of affections in older Italian migrants' houses to highlight personal meanings related to affective bonds with places. This helps illustrating the articulation of identity and attachment to places amongst an older Italian migrants' perspective in Newcastle.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This project aims to explore a sense of attachment and identification to places from the perspective of older Italian migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne. Thus, it requires an approach which seeks to understand how individuals interpret these concepts, to focus on how they are negotiated and expressed according to participants' perspectives. In order to do so, this chapter sets out the methodological approach taken in this research project.

This chapter discusses the choice for adopting an ethnographic method of research, outlining how this meets the aims of the project. It illustrates how an ethnographic approach can be considered suitable for gaining an understanding of participants' perspective on questions of attachment and identity. In doing so, it argues for the importance of grounding such research in ethnographic fieldwork, which draws on in-depth and semi-structured interviewing and extensive participant observation.

Firstly, I explain the methods used in collecting ethnographic material before moving on to discuss the process of recruiting, gaining access and building relationships with the group of people I worked with. In doing so, this chapter provides a description of the research settings where participant observation was conducted, and gives consideration to conducting community-based fieldwork. Secondly, it highlights the ethnographic techniques adopted: participant observation, in-depth and semi-structured interviews. Thirdly, it provides an understanding of my position as a researcher within the fieldwork, after which I reflect on the way my personal characteristics and attitudes facilitated or created challenges for managing fieldwork relations. Fourthly, an outline of the process of the research analysis will be provided. There, I detail some of the key issues arising from the negotiation of consent and ethical considerations. Finally, I provide an overview of the research participants.

### **3.2 Ethnography: perspective and practice**

This research is guided in its use of the ethnographic approach by the methodological reflection in anthropology (Malinowski, 1922; Clifford, 1988; Marcus, 1998; Geertz, 2008). The founder of modern ethnography, Malinowski (1922) described it as being a well-suited research technique for gaining an understanding of a specific group of people or society, from the inside (Malinowski, 1961). The

expression 'to grasp the native's point of view' (Malinowski, 1922, p. 25) defined the ethnographer's goal as 'to realize the native's vision of the world'. I am aware that it is not entirely possible to fully acquire participants' perspectives – but only an understanding as intimate as possible of the phenomena investigated- nonetheless, I believe this is an important aim to pursue.

My interest in Malinowski's point of view lies in the way he made his experience of research a basis for self-reflection on his ethnographic methodology. Ethnography is premised on researchers immersing themselves, as deeply as possible, into the social and cultural field in which the research takes place, participating in the local life of the people explored. To this day, this is considered the basis of ethnographic fieldwork: participant observation.

Participant observation is founded on an inductive approach to research and implies a direct engagement with social and cultural reality, building a series of trust relationships over time with the group of people under investigation. To establish an authentic relationship with the group of people, Malinowski 'lived as a native, among the natives for many months together, watching them daily at work and at play, conversing with them in their own tongue, and deriving all his information from the surest sources – personal observation and statements made to him directly by the natives' (Frazer in Malinowski, 1922, p. 2).

I acknowledge that the traditional gaze on the 'native' has become a controversial topic of discussion among anthropologists (Rabinow *et al.*, 1986; Clifford, 1988; Marcus, 1998; Geertz, 2008). This debate is concerned with the analytics, aesthetics and politics of ethnography in reducing the ethnographic authority, as it no longer fits within the model for the study of a culture (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). Therefore, my position in the field was also very much influenced by abandoning positivist wisdom, traditionally attributed to the role of the observer. Instead, as established in anthropology, the researcher and participants are recognised as being equally involved in the production of knowledge (Geertz, 2008). This is in line with the critiques of the 'old' orthodoxy, that acknowledged subjectivity in the production of knowledge and the importance of reflexive attention, claiming for the authorial status of the ethnographer in the field (Geertz and Marcus, 1986). Therefore, I conceive ethnography as a process of writing about a culture (Geertz, 2008) and I sought to avoid the process of distancing the 'other' (Fabian, 2014). I conceived data as

generated through the encounter *between* the researcher and the participants, as situated in the social and cultural context in which the ethnographic encounter took place (Hastrup, 1987; Tedlock, 1991; Hastrup, 1992). I believe that 'self' and the 'other' are inextricably involved in a dialectical process (Fabian, 1990). Consequentially, in line with theories on gender studies, I adopt the idea that a conception of the neutrality of the ethnographer in the field, must be abandoned (Conaway, 1986); as the researcher's activities in the field, from a subjective perspective, are part of the reality that it is intended to be studied (Clifford, 1988). Therefore, the ethnographer is a positioned subject (Rosaldo, 1984) in conversation with people in the field.

Drawing on the anthropological tradition of ethnography in this research, I also adopt the constructivist way of generating meanings to attribute to reality, alongside research participants (Andrews, 2012). This refers to the fact that meanings and experiences are socially constructed, produced and reproduced during the course of the research encounters, as generated by people in conversation with each other. The conversation is a product of the historically contingent, socio-cultural context in which this take place. This has become a key focus of academic attention, in particular in qualitative research on migration (Ganga and Scott, 2006) when the researcher is considered an 'insider', such as sharing similar cultural, linguistic, and national heritage – as I discuss in section 3.5. Thus, to grasp individual meanings attributed to reality according to the participants' perspective, I adopt ethnography as my goal is to provide rich and detail insights into people's views, actions, stories, and daily life. In Rowles (1987) migration is theorized as embedded in a larger life context and ethnographic methods has been identified as the best way to access the meaning and experiences of places amongst older people.

Cutchin (2001) emphasize the qualitative (ethnographic) methodologies for the study on the relationship between older people and places, defining these as 'necessary to assess and understand the problematic situation and place integration process for different elders living in varied places' (p.41). As also argued by scholars on geographical gerontology, ethnography enable detail insights on life-course approach to personal history (Skinner *et al.*, 2017). In line with these scholarship perspectives, I adopt the ethnographic method of research as the more widely considered the most appropriate to access the nexus between the meanings and experiences of places amongst older Italians in Newcastle.

It is generally agreed amongst ethnographers that in order to explore

‘the extent to which the researcher actually participates in social events and actually performs social acts depends hugely on the nature of the research site, and within it, the nature of the activities being undertaken at any given time’ (Atkinson and Pugsley, 2005, p. 231).

Hammersley (2006) in seeking to further define this methodology, draws on a combination of formal techniques during the ethnography fieldwork, consisting of

‘fairly lengthy contact, through participant observation in relevant settings, and/or through relatively open-ended interviews designed to understand people’s perspectives, perhaps complemented by the study of various sorts of documents – officially, publicly available, or personal’ (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4).

The duration of various research encounters undertaken during ethnographic fieldwork may vary considerably, depending on the nature of the daily life activities of interest and the developing rapport between researcher and participants. Ethnographers’ participate in informants’ everyday lives across a wide range of everyday practices, specific to the group being studied, as a way of knowing other people’s ways of being, and treating these experiences with reflexive attention. The length of fieldwork in ethnographic study depends upon the complexity of the setting, the researcher’s familiarity with it, and the degree of information saturation that the researcher seeks (Atkinson and Pugsley, 2005).

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews are an important element of participant observation. These are usually characterised by employing a

‘conversational tone and structure. Questions are not posed in a predetermined order, nor are they necessarily couched in standardized formats’ (Atkinson and Pugsley, 2005, p. 231)

The ethnographer draws on a growing sense of what is important in the lives of people he or she is working with to ask more meaningful and relevant questions about the topic of research as the work develops.

Part of the ethnographic documentation is constituted by fieldnotes taken throughout the fieldwork process, which are:

‘detailed and concrete reconstructions of what was said and done’  
(Atkinson and Pugsley, 2005, p. 231).

This is in addition to memories, thoughts, impressions, and topics of conversations that the ethnographer engages in with research participants. The researcher can complement these sources through the study of various sorts of official, publicly available, or personal documents (Hammersley, 2006).

Being that ethnography is an on-going process, involving the negotiation of relations and the interaction between the social actors, the levels of intimacy and disclosures of narratives, degrees of thoughts and point of views shared, depend upon the social relationship established between ethnographer and informants. Therefore, the relation-building process is considered to be part of the fieldwork process, and in this study these will be taken into consideration for further analysis. Similarly, since both the researcher and the participants are involved in the process of meanings construction (through sharing perspectives, everyday life, experiences, thoughts, beliefs, representations), the experience of social interaction will be treated with reflexive attention, together with participants’ motivations, expectations and interpretations related to the research project.

### **3.3 Recruiting process**

#### *3.3.1 Enter in contact with potential participants*

Data collection for this project began on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2015, as soon as I received the ethical consent from the University. Despite so, I like to imagine that my fieldwork began through a series of lucky coincidences. The next section illustrate how I started building relationship with my potential participants, prior the official starting date.

I like to imagine that my fieldwork began through a series of lucky coincidences, even before the official starting date. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014, I was on a one-way journey from Rome to Newcastle, the city where I was going to spend at least the next 3 years of my life undertaking a PhD project. I had never previously been in the North East of England. On the flight, I was seated next to a man of around 60 years old, whom I became engaged in a convivial conversation. This man was a second-



generation Italian living in the UK. 'He speaks a very weird Italian!' I remember thinking as we started up a conversation. At that point, I had no idea that I was going to conduct ethnographic research with older Italian migrants, as it became clear to me only few months later via guidance and discussion with my doctoral supervisors. However, we exchanged contact details and promised to see each other again in the future.

As soon as I defined the research topic and finalized my research design, this man was the first person I contacted. I sent him some e-mails to explain the research project and he got back to me, exclaiming that he was also very happy to introduce me to his mother, an 84 years old lady. This lady played an important role in my research, because, when a few months later I personally met these people for a Sunday lunch in her home, I learned that she used to regularly attend an Association for Anglo-Italians. A few weeks later, I went with her to meet the members of the association that I illustrate next. This later became the site for my participant observation. In the meantime, before the field-work commenced, I regularly attended the Newcastle Public Library for my context based study, such as exploring historical and geographical archives. One day, I spoke with the librarian about my research project. She was so interested in my research that she offered her help in recruiting participants, since she had an Italian friend in town. She gave me his contact details and I sent him an e-mail to explain details of the research. While writing several e-mails to my first contacts for several months, I built a relationship with them and they maintained a keen interest in the research project<sup>16</sup>.

Another fortunate event that coincided with the advent of this PhD project: a book was published entitled *Out of Italy: The History of Italians in the North East* (Shankland, 2014). This book was an important source of information on the historical and social context of the group of people I was going to work with. Moreover, its author, Hugh Shankland, a retired Professor of Italian Study at Durham University, also became a special informant on my project: I contacted him and met him before beginning data collection, asking as much information as possible. The day that we met, he expressed his enthusiasm for the project I was to embark on and, thus, offered his assistance for the initial stage of the research, discussing the

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16 Since January 2015 I exchange e-mails with my first contacts, and I explained that I needed to wait to receive ethical approval from the University before properly proceeding with my ethnographic fieldwork. After I received ethical approval on 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2015, as stated above, I began to meet with my first contacts and proceeded to recruit new participants for my study.

possibility of being in contact with potential participants. Indeed, he had been invited to participate at a summer lunch that was to take place the following week, organized by older Italian migrants. He was about to decline this invitation, as he was no longer able to attend. However, instead, he suggested that I participate on his behalf. These series of chance encounters and pro-active engagements formed the basis of how I began to enter into contact with a community of older Italians in Newcastle.

### *3.3.2 Negotiate research participation*

By this time, the main sampling technique I adopted was 'snowball' or 'chain' sampling: participants themselves were asked for suggestions on social contacts, as well as places that were significant to the Italian migrant population in Newcastle. Moreover, during the course of the fieldwork, I often happened to meet new participants through my social contacts and everyday life in town, such as: walking in the City Centre, having meals with my friends in Italian restaurants, going to the Italian hairdresser, and so forth. On these occasions, introducing myself and my research interests, even to those who did not apparently have an immediate relation to my research project, was a strategic way to enable people to ask me more questions, or to address my requests to somebody else they knew.

### 3.3.3 Tool for recruitment

The project was advertised through flyers (see Figure 3).



Figure 3 Flyers for recruitment (designed by the author, January, 2015)

These flyers were produced with the aim of capturing the attention of those interested in participating in a research project about Italians in Newcastle. The flyers indicated the desired nationality (first, second or third generation Italians) and the age range of the ideal participants (over 60 years old), inviting those interested to share their stories with me. The flyers were distributed around various shops in different relevant public places in Newcastle. Shankland (2014) identified the significant social and leisure centers for the Italian community in the city, as well as neighborhoods and commercial activities where the Italian community tended to congregate (including specific Italian cafés, Italian restaurants, and hairdresser salon, ice-cream parlours and so forth). I used to leave some flyers with those who participated in the project, so that they might speak about and promote the project within their social networks, which could lead to others contacting me in the future.

This strategy had minimal success in terms of actual recruitment, in the sense that no one used my contacts details to get in touch. However, the production of the flyer

turned out to be useful in raising my profile and ‘getting me recognized’. What I mean is that the more flyers I circulated amongst my contacts and sites, the more people knew about my research. I learned this, during a later stage of the fieldwork, when I was informed – and also bore witness – to the fact that some of my participants used the flyers for different purposes: to decorate their business, their houses, and their cars, send greetings to their family members or neighborhoods. Therefore, without being used specifically for the research recruitment purposes, the flyers enabled some people (not specifically Italians or ideal participants) to recognize the research project.

On the one hand, without being aware of it, I created a visual identity of the project through the flyers that might have helped in building trust amongst the group I worked with. On the other hand, these flyers introduced some unexpected cons as, to some, I was not identified as a researcher, but as ‘the girl who will give us lovely cards’. Therefore, when I was presented with this misunderstanding, I needed to reaffirm my research interests. Nonetheless, the flyers were a useful tool to initiate conversation with participants during research encounters. This was made possible because I designed a flyer that specifically contained images chosen to evoke feelings of place in Italy (from the North to the South) and that enabled participants to identify with some of the characters (mainly famous actors from the 1950’s.) – yet I assumed that my ideal participants would know them. Some of the images in the flyers were chosen to encourage conversations on experiences of migration and Italian identity, as framed by specific cinematographic narratives<sup>17</sup>.

### 3.3.4 *Broadening the sample*

I primarily recruited participants in a community center for Italian migrants, which I attended weekly for the duration of the fieldwork. While I attended the Association regularly, I considered the possibility of broadening my sample. Hence, by this time, I was concerned not to seek to over represent the role of this particular group. Therefore, I mapped the context, negotiated access and built relationships in different public places. I then began to form relationships with other Italians beyond the

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<sup>17</sup> I am referring here to the image of Sophia Loren in the popular movie *It started in Naples*, directed by Melville Shavelson in 1960. In a scene in the movie, Sophia Loren sung the American version of popular Italian song ‘Tu vuo fa l’Americano!’ (‘Wanna be Americano?’), written by Renato Carosone in collaboration with Nicola ‘Nisa’ Salerno in 1956. The song is addressed to a specific kind of Italian migrant who was attracted by the ‘modern lifestyle’ - and in the context of the US, changed attitudes and behaviours. The message of the song admonishes the immigrant not to forget the Italian roots. I used this picture to question Italian identity in the context of migration.

Association, and/or, belonging to different communities in various neighborhoods near Newcastle. In particular, I became engaged in two more community settings: one community of Italian migrants in Ponteland and one in Jarrow. These are two districts around Newcastle that differ in their socio-cultural and economic characteristics. Consequently, I needed to quickly learn how to get access these groups (code of behavior, dressing code, etc.). In addition, I also built relationships with several other Italians who were not engaged in any community setting.

The varied and creative approaches I employed to enter into contact with potential research participants and negotiate their participation, build some social networks and then recruit participants outside of the initial path of this research, contributed to the richness and the diversity of the data collected.

### **3.4 Data collection**

#### *3.4.1 Ethnographic fieldwork: context and practices*

Ethnographic fieldwork was carried out for 12 months during the second year of my PhD project – from July 2015 until July 2016. During the course of data collection, I was immersed in the field and engaged in different kind of activities, alongside my participants. Through this process, I participated in the flow of their daily lives and in social events, such as: leisure activities, family meetings and social gatherings. Data was collected through employing a range of different research techniques, including participant observation and in-depth or semi-structured interviews.

In this study, ‘participant observation’ refers to the collection of discussion and narratives via naturally occurring conversations. Whereas ‘interviewing’ refers to the collection of narratives in a more ‘formalized setting’, characterised by the presence of the audio-recorder, and with agreement for it to be switched on and off, accordingly to different needs and situations. In-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted with different participants or with the same participants but on different occasions. Generally, in-depth interviews were conducted with participants that I had met before the interview, on different occasions during the participant observation phase of the project. Whereas, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants I had met only for the purpose of the interview. The various techniques used during research encounters ranged considerably in duration over the course of fieldwork: from short, passing conversations to spending many hours together with research participants – depending on the nature of those daily life

activities and the developing rapport between myself and participants. The meetings which culminated in interviews were conducted through sharing everyday life activities: sharing meals, coffees, drinks. Sometimes during these activities, while the interview was occurring, participant observation was used to compliment the process of interview. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the blurred boundaries between the two techniques.

A total of 60 older Italian migrants were recruited for this study, and with whom I built deeper research ties as documented in my fieldwork diary. I primarily conducted regular participant observation in a community-based setting that I attended weekly for the duration of the fieldwork. In addition to this, over the course of the fieldwork, participant observation was conducted in other settings through attending social events.

A total of 41<sup>18</sup> in-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 27 participants. I did not interview any participant on more than 3 occasions, but I met a number of them on more than one occasion. All the audio-recorded interviews were conducted when ethical consent was obtained by participants. Only after written consent of participants, interviews started. Sometimes, even the more private research encounters were not 'one-to-one', as I had expected: I wish to acknowledge the role of family members who were not considered participants, but who agreed to participate to the interviews (an example of this will be illustrated in Chapter 4) who were asked to sign the informed consent alongside former participants. On occasions, other members of the family, friends, or neighbors were involved, as either required by participants or simply because they were in the same place and became interested in the study. Despite the unexpected nature of these additions, I was always enthusiastic to engage other people in the conversation. Such conversations often led to insightful reminiscences, discussions and debates – which represent a further layer of data. Sometimes during the course of the interviews, the people involved initiated conversation with participants about topics relevant to my research. This occurred spontaneously amongst them, and I benefitted from being there as an 'invisible observer'. Although these additional people (a total number of 12 including partners, family members and friends) participated in the interviews,

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<sup>18</sup> After the formal data collection (June 2015-July 2016), some extra interviews were conducted for the purpose of interpreting the research findings alongside with 5 participants. This produced a further layer of data. These conversations have also been recorded, but not considered as part of the data and consequently not transcribed or analyzed, as I explain further.

they were not considered formal participants as they did not meet the requirements of my recruiting (i.e., age, nationality).

All the semi-structured and in-depth interviews were audio-recorded when consent was negotiated. However, some interviews, which included 4 different participants, were not recorded as the participants' consensus was to decline recording. Given their explicit desire for the interview not to be recorded, I only used the information gathered on this occasion to inform the context of the research. When consent was negotiated, each interview encounter took an average of 3 hours, and on some occasions substantially longer – an entire afternoon or even a full day. In one case, when high trust was built in advance, I felt confident to stay overnight at my participant's house to continue the interview the following day and bake together a dessert that required two days.

The topics of conversation, information and data gathered differed on each occasion with research participants, and was influenced by the relationship built up with each of them. Please find in Appendix (D) a topic guide for the interviews with participants. In most cases, I also conducted a visual documentation of both private and public domains (photographs at homes or private businesses) where the interviews took place. The visual material also included some other elements selected to elicit answers or initiate conversations with participants, or that participants chose to show me (i.e., personal photographs, family archives, maps of the city, objects of affections, and various sorts of documents – official, publicly available, or personal, etc.), that were relevant to the research questions. I was also involved in exploring the interpretation of my research findings with five participants, which produced a further layer of data. This conversation was also recorded.

To recap, my ethnographic documentation included: field notes; material acquired from the participant observations; audio-recorded interviews; and photographs of the domestic objects or home layout various sorts of documents (i.e., personal photo albums, journal articles, and so forth).

### *3.4.2 Research setting of participant observation*

In this study, participant observation that was conducted during the fieldwork implied a direct engagement with the social and cultural reality, in order to build relationships of trust with informants over time. As stated, participant observation was mainly

conducted in a social setting in 'Amici d'Italia', a leisure center frequented by Italian migrants in Newcastle City Center. For the entire duration of my fieldwork (July 2015-July 2016), I attended this center on a weekly basis and gradually built trust with participants and patiently negotiated consent; this provided a sense of continuity to the research process. Members unofficially term it the 'Club'. Thus, in the sections that follow I use the two terms interchangeably.

This site was a hybrid form of social setting: an Italian association, hosted by an Irish Social Club. The building is located in the China-town area of Newcastle. With an inherent hybridity, it re-enforces a particularly British form of cultural sociality: people meet there to play bingo. The members of the Club were mostly older Italian migrants, but not exclusively so: persons of other nationalities also attended the association regularly. Some were the English widows of Italian migrants, neighbors or friends of different nationalities. Most of the attendees were retired and older than 60 years old. Occasionally younger family members or just younger friends attended the meetings, making the social center a very dynamic setting. The center, therefore, has also acquired a significant meaning for second and third generation Italians who occasionally attend.

Every Tuesday, from 12:00 until 15:00, the center hosted an average of 30-40 guests. Generally, guests met on the second floor of the building, in an area with chairs and tables. Each of the regular members possessed their own role: some are at the entrance of the room, in charge of collecting money (£1) from each guests and writing down the names of the attendees; some were involved in setting the buffet table with tea, coffee and biscuits for everyone; someone was assigned to sell the bingo tickets around the table; others were given the responsibility of setting up the microphone and other equipment for the bingo game; finally, someone was assigned to count the money from the tickets sold, in order to announce the amount of the bingo prizes, before the game began.

Generally, the bingo game began one hour after the initial meeting time, to allow everyone to meet at the place at their own convenience. Thus, there was the opportunity for attendees to greet each other, socialize, engage in some conversations (with the ethnographer as well), while enjoying a cup of tea or coffee. There were also those who join the Club only for that hour of socialization, and left the place as soon as bingo began.



Usually, after standing and socializing, people took their seats at tables on a side of the room; although seemingly spontaneous, they were used to sitting more or less in the same place every time. The noise of the attendees chatting with each other only ended when somebody announced the beginning of the game. During bingo, while the list of the picked numbers was announced by the speaker, the other guests commented on the announcements with rituals jokes, generating a convivial atmosphere.

The suspense would rise steadily, culminating when someone announced 'Bingo' – or 'Hus' – meaning a winning card in the local Geordie-. Between a Bingo match and the next round, while there was a wait for the tickets to be sold, some of the guests sometimes sang an Italian song on the microphone, and everybody joined in, singing and clapping their hands, to show their appreciation. Often the Italian songs were ones which were popular in the 50's or 60's, and sometimes associated with the theme of migration. When the bingo game ended, all the equipment was sorted, and people said their goodbyes and left, promising to meet each other again the following week<sup>19</sup>.

### *3.4.3 Gaining access and building relationship*

To build relationships with the group of people within the Club, I acted as a regular member: paying my contribution to be there, drinking coffee, engaging in conversation, and playing bingo. Over time, I gradually built up relationships with the community members, talking with almost every guest on each visit before and between the games.

I tried to take part in the group as much as possible, learning the codes of behavior, which I struggled with at the beginning but served to gain me access deeper into the community. For example, the first time I attended the Club, I thought I could avoid playing bingo and just be there, observing. However, they involved me in the game, and I understood that they perceived somebody who didn't play as 'weird'. Some highlighted this, by asking me if I didn't feel well, or if I didn't have enough money. Some, supposing that I wasn't able to understand the numbers in English, suggested that I could read these, as they would be displayed on the board. Some others, approaching my table, offered their help in spotting the numbers on the papers,

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19 From September 2017 to May 2018, as part of a student AWARD, I conducted a film as a project of public engagement Figure 19. This aimed to promote social aspects of the environment from an older migrant population perspective.

teaching me the 'tricks' of the game, which consist of reading the numbers vertically. Some highlighted the practical advantage of me playing: 'you can win, but also you have to play, so we will win your money too!' In one way or another, I was welcomed into the setting, but I couldn't attend as only an observer; I was warmly invited to participate. This was a clear example of how participation was complementary to observation in my ethnographic practice.

After a while, I came to the realization that participating in their game informed my understanding of the meaning the event held according to my participants' perspectives; I was able to collect a vast amount of observational data; it helped us to create a common ground to share the experience of having interrupted conversations during every breaks, laugh together at the funny comments that were shouted out when the numbers were announced; and this became an important part of building field relationships.

The initial hour spent in conversation with everyone, provided me with rich information about the group of people I researched with. Therefore, while everybody else played and were concentrating on their piece of paper, sometimes I only pretended to play. I took advantage of the general silence, to reflect on what I was seeing or had heard during the informal conversation of the hour before, writing down some notes on the back of the bingo tickets. These notes became useful additions to my fieldwork diary that I generally updated following the meetings.

Writing notes during the game was not always possible without raising suspicion: one day, the people I shared the table with noticed that I used the paper to do something else, and recalled my attention to the game by stating forcefully that 'I should pay attention, if I wanted to win'. I needed to become one of them, paying attention to what was important to them; therefore I focused on the game while I was there. Soon I realized that 'winning' was not necessarily to my advantage. Once, during my first few times attending, I won. While some were genuinely happy, other were not. One lady, remarked that 'I have been wasting money here for years, and now you just came here and won!' On that occasion, I smiled and I appreciated the humor. However, later on, I reflected on how important winning was for them in a bingo game. Even if the amount of money is on average about £1-£2 – depending on the number of participants – winning can 'make their day'. In fact, I realized that some recalled the following week exactly who had won the previous matches, and how

many times the same person won a game during the previous few weeks. It was apparent that it was of great importance to them, as it obviously wasn't for me. Therefore, during the next times, ceding to altruism, I decided that I should leave this pleasure to them.

Participating in the game, and learning from their reaction to my behaviors, helped to deepen my understanding of the community and how it was experienced. As explained in greater details above, the process of learning the internal rules of the setting and strategically acting according to these, took some time. I thus set myself a specific code of behavior in order to gain access and build relationships. Those who attended had known each other for a long time. I needed to be accepted as a researcher and as a person.

In order to be accepted as a researcher, I used to talk to participants about myself, my project and my research interests. To build relationships of trust, I often talked about my professional experiences, as well as the ethical consideration I had to negotiate involving them as research participants<sup>20</sup>. I wanted them to know that I was truly interested in their opinions and in their stories; thus, I used to memorize their names and some events they described in their lives – practicing 'active listening' while they were talking. When I asked questions, I often showed my curiosity but I always tried to avoid 'pushing' some topics, when I perceived that the questions were not welcomed. I wanted them to know I was happy to listen, but that I also respected their silences.

In order to be accepted as a person, I used to talk about myself and what was important to me outside of the project. Trying to be myself, being open about conversations about my 'world' and establishing a reciprocal process of knowledge exchange, has helped me to build trust and relationships with my research participants. An example of this was when my family members were in town, and introduced them to my research participants (my mother in late August 2015, my brother in October 2015, and both my mother and father in April 2016, Easter time). Since my research participants welcomed me into their family settings (houses, friendship, kinship), I wanted them to also know something about me: where I come

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<sup>20</sup> I have been a member of the Italian Psychological Society (Ordine Nazionale Psicologi Italiani- Albo A) since 2012. When I shared this information with research participants, it helped to establish trust in my deontological practice.

from, who I care most about. It was a way to 'reciprocate' their kindness, trust and inclusion. These relationship were in many instances nascent friendship.

Over time, my data collection became of increasing interest to my research participants due, amongst other things, to the relationship we established during the previous months. This resulted in different factors changing since the beginning of my research: I became an established member of the community; my knowledge and understanding of the participants and study group increased; and the more we became familiar, the more we communicated with each other with a high level of intimacy. Therefore, one of the main strengths of my study has arisen due to the rapport built with each research participant, which has facilitated the great richness of the data collected.

In this respect, it is important to mention that the relationships I built during the course of my fieldwork were really challenging to interrupt at the end of my data collection. Officially, my fieldwork needed to end in June 2016. However, being immersed in the field for such a long time, and having participated in several social events, I was invited after June to different meetings (i.e., a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of marriage of a member of the Club). I decided to extend the data collection for this purpose. Being away from the city during summer 2016, enabled me to decline invitations without threatening the relationships I had built. Moreover, in the following months (from September 2016 to September 2017) although my data collection ended, I remained in contact with my participants, since it was equally important for me not to simply disappear in the eyes of the community group. I used to phone some of them, and asked for information about others. When I could, I continued to participate in meetings and fundraising events – generally on a monthly basis<sup>21</sup>.

#### *3.4.4 Interviews*

As stated above, while undertaking participant observation in the leisure center, I conducted in-depth and semi-structured interviews in different settings. This is because it soon became apparent that it wasn't possible to engage in in-depth conversations at the leisure center, given the lack of privacy and the very frequent interruptions by other members, or by the activities themselves. Therefore, I was invited to meet participants elsewhere.

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<sup>21</sup> This relationship was reinforced during the filming process and in the following screening events.

I let my participants decide where the interview was going to take place, since the choice of the location was already important to highlight my research questions. Thus, I was often welcomed into my participant's houses. This enabled house-hold based ethnography and material culture based approach, as I discuss in more detail below. In some cases, interviews took place in participant's own business setting – restaurants, fish and chips shops and hairdresser salons – which also implied blurred boundaries between private and public domains, as I discuss in Chapter 6. Very rarely, participants decided to meet in public contexts (cafés, squares, parks).

Given the unstructured nature of the ethnographic interviews, I drew on my growing sense of what was important in the lives of participants, to ask meaningful and relevant questions about the topic of research as the work developed. The in-depth and semi-structured interviews conducted 'one-to-one', enabled the emergence of very intimate biographical narration and/or co-reflections on the story of their lives.

Biographical accounts included participants' history of migration, and covered their life course and key life events. I aimed to initiate narratives and raise key reflections about participants' attachment to places and their sense of belonging, through focusing on their past experiences, present/current situation and perspectives on the future, but not in a specific chronological order. My questions remained relatively open-ended and exploratory. Generally, I avoided introducing academic frames of reference that would not been understood by my participants, and that would risk creating more distance between us. Therefore, in most cases I adopted terms that could be easily understood and generate conversation. For example, to explore sense of attachment to places I asked: 'where is home for you?'

Some of the participants in my research (approximately 10) had taken part some years before in a similar data collection procedure undertaken by a previous scholar. This created an expectation in my participants about the kind of work that was going to emerge from their data. Such processes became particularly clear to me as I negotiated the interview agenda or through general comments. For example, the research conducted by the previous scholar also included audio-recorded interviews, requesting to look at their personal photo-albums. Although, I never requested photos, some participants had their personal family album already settled on the table before the interviews had begun. During each research encounter with participants who had been involved with the previous data collection, I had to be

careful to understand what kind of experience they had had, in order to either position my project as being in a similar vein or differing significantly – whichever fit the situation.

Another aspect is that it is important to highlight concerns the difference between meeting the participants for the first time in their home to conduct interviews, and those I engaged in a community setting where I conducted participant observation. The main difference regards, above all else, the kind of rapport I had developed and the amount of information I already knew, that helped me ground the questions during the interviews, through recalling narrations that I had previously engaged with. Moreover, in the case of participants engaged in a community setting, the meeting that took place for the interview was often mentioned by other members of the community the following week<sup>22</sup>. At some point, my presence in the group generated genuine interest and enthusiasm. Thus, the number of participants in my data collection increased.

#### *3.4.5 Go-along interviews*

This project also included go-along interviews. This means that the researcher accompanies the research participants, as they move through places in their everyday lives, while simultaneously observing and interviewing them, asking them to reflect on their practices and their relationship with places (Kusenbach, 2003). Often, after our weekly meetings, I used to walk with some to the metro, or bus station, and sometimes to stop for a further chat in a coffee shop before leaving. Other times, the same go-along interviews happened in my participants' cars. Thus, to reach their homes, they would come to pick me up at the metro station and drive me in their homes. During these short journeys we would begin to talk about significant topics. In a few cases, instead of going home directly, participants would decide to show me some area in the neighbourhood, they particularly were attached to. In such circumstances, I never switched on my recorder, but referred to the conversations that happened in the car during the subsequent audio-recorded interview.

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<sup>22</sup> This enabled me to thank them again for the hospitality they had given me in their homes, and motivated some other members of the community to participate to the research. An example of this was when a participant acknowledged that I appreciated a meal cooked for me, some others were keen to invite me in their own houses to taste their own variant of the same dish.

### *3.4.6 Visual Documentation of ethnographic contexts and practices*

In most cases, I also conducted a visual documentation of both ethnographic contexts and practices. I generated visual materials through the use of my personal camera. I took photographs of the interaction and the research contexts, showing participants during the one-to-one interviews – with the presence of their friends and family members. When other people were involved, I also asked them to sign the consent form, to authorize the dissemination of these photographs for research purpose. I generally focused on private and public domains (photographs at homes or private businesses) where the interviews took place. In this sense, my visual documentation mirrors the account of one of the founder of the Amber Associates, the documentary photographers Sirkka-Lisa Kottinen (Konttinen, 1983; Konttinen, 2009), who recorded the urban culture of Newcastle Byker district between 1971 and 1981 (Jobling, 1993). Hence, her photographs of the Byker residents includes the home interiors. She declared that ‘the environment does tell you as much as the person herself’ (Jobling, 1993). Thus, in most cases, I also photographed objects, furniture and home-making practices, that were meaningful to my participants. This enabled a deeper reflection on the meanings of material culture for the group under exploration – as I discuss in Chapters 5 and 6. The visual material also included some other elements selected to elicit answers or initiate conversations with participants, or that participants chose to show me: i.e., personal photographs, family archives, maps of the city, objects of affections, and various sorts of official, publically available, and personal documents, that were relevant to the research questions.

On some occasions, whole interviews were based on or led by visual material that participants chose to show me, such as in the case of their personal photo albums, which contributed to providing a chronological order to their narrations. In other cases, thanks to having the opportunity to take some photographs in particular places with my participants, interviews were conducted alongside this process<sup>23</sup>. In one case, the intention to collect and share visual material, such as pictures, formal documents and journal articles related to a local music band was the opportunity for all family members to meet up and organize a lunch with me. During the lunch, participants shared memories. After the lunch, all the visual materials were exhibited on a table, and I assumed the role of taking photographs of all these, in an attempt to record their lives through my own visual documentation.

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23 Such as the case of a self-portrait taken in a restaurant during an interview with the owner.

On only one occasion did I use a video camera to record some aspects of a research encounter, when I had been invited into a participant's home for two days in order to bake a dessert. I didn't want to miss recording the visual aspects of this interaction, as had happened during audio-recorded interviews<sup>24</sup>. I thus used my video camera to capture the baking process<sup>25</sup>.

Some of the video material were used to create a calendar -donated to each member for Christmas 2015, during my fieldwork- and a private photo exhibition in occasion of a Christmas meal in 2016 – after my fieldwork-. At the end of the meal, each participants was asked to recognize the own pictures and bring them home as a souvenir of the day. A further activity of disseminating research findings in a creative way was the printed illustrated storytelling book titled 'A very previous box'. This narrates the story of loss of places and significant others. It was presented at the Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead in October 2017. One copy of the book was given back to the participant in December 2017, as a present, and the conversation generated by this exchange can be considered a further layer of data.

### *3.4.7 Diversity of each research encounters*

During the course of my fieldwork, I was invited to participate in other social events important to my study group. A few examples included: summer meal at a fish and chips shop on the coast in July 2015; in September 2015, I attended a funeral of one member of the community; in November and December, I attended several fund raising dinner-dances organized for charity purposes in neighborhood community center (in Ponteland and Jarrow); Christmas dinner at a restaurant in Newcastle city center; Saint Valentine dinner; and Easter mass in the Italian language at a Catholic church in Newcastle city center. I also attended a talk about the Italian process of migration in Newcastle in the 19th century given by one of my participants, at a Senior Gentlemen's Club in Ponteland in April: I was there to attend the talk (despite my gender and my age, I was welcomed) and gave a short talk (5 minutes) to introduce my PhD project. Other events I attended included: a celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of an Italian commercial activity in May and a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary wedding of one member of the community in July 2016. Following every research encounter, I wrote down extensive field-notes in order to capture the relevant data. Furthermore,

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24 The need to document visual aspects of the interactions, impossible to capture otherwise, led to my intention of creating the documentary 'Age is just a Bingo Number' in 2017/2018.

25 This video material is one of the first scene in the film 'Age is just a Bingo Number' when the participant introduces myself as a student of Newcastle University.



my participation at social events that involved my study participants, became interesting opportunities to meet new potential participants and reinforce relationships with existing ones.

Participant observation was also conducted when I was invited to spend time with some of the research participants in their homes, generally on occasion of the interview. This enabled me to feel part of the context and share some of my perceptions or ask for clarifications. Here, I provide some examples of the activities I was involved in during household-based ethnography: cooking, setting the table and dish washing when in participant's home and sharing a meal; assisting in baking a traditional English sweet; watching television together on the sofa during the evening, and commenting on some Italian TV programs; helping (or trying to) fix some broken objects; helping to move heavy items from the loft of the home to the living room; talking on Skype with some of their family members abroad; touring their gardens and learning from their knowledge of plants and trees; and going from one participant's house to another, in the same neighborhood, to bring some fruits.

There is nothing extraordinary in what I participated in, but it was the natural result of being immersed completely in the participants' daily lives. Participating in these activities was part of the data collection process, since these encounters often generated rich information about participants' everyday lives. Hence, the mutable character of household-based ethnography is explored in the ethnographic work of Gregson (2007), based on 16 houses in a coal-mining village of the North-East of England. Her study showed the situated nature of participant observation in these contexts by the active involvement of the researcher in the flow of everyday life. Gregson reflected on how the researcher is involved in actually doing things alongside research participants and these actions are effects of the ethnographic practices. She stated that by the act of doing, the researcher should acknowledge the body as a research tool, as she stated that the aim of this kind of ethnography is to access practices, not to only talk about practices.

Similarly, all the activities I was involved in alongside my participants, allowed me to reflect on my role and the kind of contribution I could make during the research encounter. Moreover, often the intentions of participants to teach me how to do certain things was a key component in the process of initiating narratives, sharing thoughts and memories. In the context of my ethnography, these practices could

even be seen as a way to interpret the generational relationship I established with my participants, as I felt I was seen as the younger newcomer who had to be educated on how to do things (i.e., cooking in the English style, setting the table in the English manner, etc.).

It was hard to close relationship with participants after the 12 months fieldwork. We were attached to each other, on a personal level. I made clear that I was not able to go and visit them in the Bingo Club on a weekly basis. However, this was not well received by the community setting. They continue inviting me also for personal (Birthday parties, Anniversary of wedding, Sundays lunch) or public events (such as Christmas Dinners or fundraising events organized by the community). I withdraw several times, but I felt this was perceived as a sort of offence. Plus, my social and everyday life was so much embedded around these networks (having an Italian hairdresser, being a customer of several Italian restaurants), that my change of habits was noticed and these people were wondering if I was not happy any longer with their services. I explained that it was only due to working reasons, but this was not always understood. I kept continue having conversations though phone with some. Toward the end of my PhD project, I decided to visit the community to the Club in important occasion and spend quality time together, as we used to do. This revealed to be positively perceived.

To summarise, I would like to comment on the complexities and diversities involved in this data collection. As mentioned above, research encounters differed for many reasons: different techniques were adopted (participant observation, semi-structured or in-depth interviews); the number of people engaged in the process of data collection differed; conversations took place in different locations (indoors/ outdoors); different levels of relationships with participants were cultivated, some built before the interviews; and different languages were spoken (English, Italian or a mix of both). A combination of all these factors influenced the kind of data generated.

#### *3.4.8 Strengths and weaknesses of methodology*

In this section, I emphasize the strength of the ethnographic methodology in exploring the meaning of places: being in the field and conducting participant observation, especially in the domestic sphere, enabled me to capture 'everyday' cultural experiences, that couldn't have been accessed otherwise. Some conversations were initiated spontaneously by research participants, outside of any

'structured questions'. These occurred when simply walking indoors, as a metaphor of 'entering into somebody else's life'. Meanings of places and their embodied 'unwritten rule' raised during these research encounters, identified the foundations upon which I built relationships with my participants, reinforced and re-emerged again through the dynamics established during the course of the fieldwork. This is in line with some anthropologist who assert that 'culture is naturally the property of a spatially localized people and that the way to study such culture is to go there' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997, p. 3).

The strength of the adopted methodology allowed for the richness of the data but, conversely, I acquired a huge amount of data and the analysis process was very time consuming, causing a delay in the data analysis and thesis writing. Moreover, the ethnographic experience was very demanding, both from a professional and personal point of view: the fieldwork was time-intensive; the learning process required me to become familiar with the codes of behaviour of the different groups; being existentially involved in relation with others, I needed to invest in professional and interpersonal skills, drawing on my entire biography and personality; and I felt I had a moral obligation in how I dealt with, informed and represented participants<sup>26</sup>. This relates to my positionality as a researcher and the dynamic between me and my participants, as I discuss later in this chapter.

Moreover, reflecting on how all ethnographic research is embedded in time and space, one of the limitations I encountered concerned the historical contingencies that took place during my data collection. One example of this was the murder of Giulio Regeni in February 2016. Giulio was an Italian Cambridge University PhD student, who was abducted and tortured to death in Egypt while conducting his ethnographic fieldwork. This episode enabled insight on the kind of conversation I intentionally avoided with my participants when focusing on controversial issues that related to them, or anybody else. Another example of how ethnography unfolds in space and time is the Brexit referendum that occurred almost at the end of my fieldwork that I discuss in more detail in the Epilogue section of this dissertation.

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<sup>26</sup> Especially during the filming process, as that aimed to be disseminated to a wide audience.

### **3.5 Reflexive attention to the research experience**

#### *3.5.1 The self as an instrument for knowledge: role of the ethnographer*

Many anthropologists argue that the self is the most important 'scientific instrument' for mediating and acquiring knowledge in ethnographic research. One of these is Rosaldo (1984), who illustrated how ethnographers are 'positioned subjects'. This position, he asserted, is defined by different aspects such as: gender, age, personal biography and perspective that play a key role in the research experience during fieldwork, thus 'enables or inhibit particular kinds of insight' (Rosaldo, 1984, p. 193). Treating the ethnographic experience with reflexive attention, I will detail the role of the ethnographer in this section of the data chapter. I point out some of the characteristics that shaped the relationship I built with participants and the data generated through conversations (nationality, region of provenance, age, gender, religion, place-bonding, and personal ideas). However, I am aware that this list is not exhaustive, and there are many other arguably equally important characteristics that I have not had the space to discuss here.

#### *3.5.2 Researcher's nationality*

This research has been conducted amongst older Italian migrants. My Italian origin played a crucial role in this ethnographic study. During the research design, shared cultural knowledge was anticipated to be important to facilitate access, ease of communication and encourage rapport. Conducting ethnography, among people of the same nationality, to some extent, researching 'from the inside', as explained above, opened up research encounters that improved the quantity and quality of data I could access. It was straightforward to initiate a dialogue with participants, through seeking common ground about what I assumed they saw as a shared history, experience, or culture.

It was also easy to gain positive responses to the cultural capital I possessed from having grown up in a particular nation – or on the contrary, being surprised by the lack of effect it had. The advantage of being Italian and conducting ethnography with Italians abroad, was also due to the possibility of very easily becoming 'one of them'

and comparing 'our way' with 'their way', in reference to the other English people, emphasising both positive and negative sides of 'the others'<sup>27</sup>.

It has been acknowledged how the positionality of the researcher matters in qualitative migration research. For example, the methodological reflection on the dynamics between a migrant researchers looking at a migrant community (Ganga and Scott, 2006) illustrates how 'being an insider' is much more complex than expected. On the one hand, the scholars argued that a degree of social proximity is an advantage for negotiating access; understanding language and cultural meanings; feeling to belong to that same *imagined community*. On the other hand, the position of being an 'insider' brings into view the differences that exist between researcher and participants. In line with this methodological reflection (Ganga and Scott, 2006), during the fieldwork, I used to position myself as being very similar to them in many aspects, although my point of view was influenced by my own subjectivity, cultural background, personal experiences, political ideas or religious beliefs, as I illustrate next. Sometimes, therefore, we agreed to recognize a common ethno-national identity and a collective memory, on other occasions we differed. Especially with the Italians of the second and third generation, the fact that I was considered to be 'a real Italian' by them, led me to reflect on the meaning of the cultural capital they seemed to recognize, while not feeling completely part of it. On the other hand, to unpack the mutual construction of sense of identity with my participants, I also experienced what Ganga and Scott (2006) define as 'diversity in proximity' such as the ability to recognize, from an 'insider' perspective, what were the similarities that tie together and the 'social fissures' that divide the researcher and participants. By 'social fissures', the scholars refer to such things as generation, class, age, gender, etc. I draw out some of these aspects that I felt were significant in the relationships I established during my fieldwork.

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<sup>27</sup> This aspect distinguishes my work from the ethnography of Anne-Marie Fortier (2000) with Italians in London. Despite not being of Italian origin herself, she stated that she could 'pass' as Italian given the dark colour of the hair and eyes, and that her provenance – French-Canadian from Quebec – was not an impediment to her integration within the group of people she worked with. She claimed her poor knowledge of the Italian language didn't emerge as a major issue and she reports that her participants often associated her with their English-born children, who often don't speak fluent Italian. By framing herself as a 'foreigner in Britain' possessing a 'Catholic background', she negotiated access to the Italian community in London.

### 3.5.3 Region of provenance: *'Region with flexible borders'*

An overlapping sense of cultural identity gave me an immediate understanding of the group of people I worked with, although I had to acknowledge several differences amongst them, as well as between myself and 'them'. Often these perceived differences were related to local particularities, given the different places where each of us came from: characteristics such as accents, background, traditions, values, belongings, and finally meanings associated with them.

As soon I started to enter into contact with the participants, I also realized that place of origin in Italy was relevant in generating affiliation or distance amongst members. Often, even in an amusing sort of way, participants reproduced the popular geographical stereotypes about North and South of Italians: stressing that their behaviours and mentality depended on the place where people initially originated from in Italy. I came to the realization that this was a way for introduce themselves to me, but also for categorizing 'the others', both in a positive or negative light. For example, some of the people in the group were even given nicknames of the region of province where they came from. What I want to emphasise here, however, is that following this assumption, the geographical location and the socio-cultural reputation of the place where I come from in Italy, also played an important role in the interpersonal relations I formed with participants, both generating close affiliations and distance, depending on the perception of it.

My birthplace is Campobasso in Molise Region, located in the centre of Italy. The region is not very well known<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, I had to help several participants to locate my birthplace when introducing myself, especially since they left Italy so many years before the time of our encounter<sup>29</sup>. The low profile of Molise Region also resulted in some advantages: the lack of any stereotypes, as some other places in Italy receive, which might have affected my relationship with some. As a result, I had the freedom to shape my local identity much more so than if they had already known, in one way or another, the place where I came from.

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<sup>28</sup> What I mean is that this area is not really well-known even amongst Italians living in Italy, given its lack of tourism, in contrast to the other regions of Italy. Molise Region doesn't have particular features that helps people form an immediate association with it.

<sup>29</sup> Molise Region was not an independent Region before 1961, but part of the Abruzzi Region. Many of my participants did not know about the existence of the autonomous region. I assumed that this depended on their migration before that date, and that their knowledge of regional autonomy had not been updated since.

Moreover, the geographical location of Molise in central Italy (although considered the South-Centre of Italy), enabled me to be perceived as neither too much of a 'Northern Italian' in the eyes of the people from the South, generating affiliations with some; nor too much of a 'Southern Italian' in the eyes of those from the North of Italy, also facilitating the generation of affiliations with the others. As a result, I suffered no antagonism on this account from any of the people I entered into contact with, 'shifting the borders of my region in the peninsula' differently at any given time, accordingly to the circumstance. Although I have never felt that I was perceived as 'one of them', I always heard expressions like 'ah, ok then, you are more similar to *us* than *the others*'. I often felt located diplomatically in the middle, between the polarized extremes that they articulated as *themselves* and *everyone else*.

#### 3.5.4 Age and intergenerational relations

My age and especially the fact that, as I learned later on, I looked much younger than I was, played a significant role in the kind of relationship I built with some of the participants. Being an unmarried student, led them to generate completely different expectations in regards to my age and expertise. The kind of intergenerational relations we established during the course of the fieldwork was also shaped by the length of my residence in Newcastle: being a newcomer to the town. Often they were happy to guide me, to offer me suggestions, to teach me how certain things worked in their city, where I had just begun to live. Aware of this dynamic, I felt I could only benefit from the role they assumed to 'educate the young newcomer' - and I was proven right. As on several occasions, they showed they were taking care of me, passing onto me their knowledge about places and culture.

#### 3.5.5 Gender and expectations about roles

My gender also had a significant influence on my data collection process and participant observation, in determining the kind of access I had to the group of people I researched with. In particular, there were always gender expectations that I needed to conform to. For example, in the setting where I conducted participant observation, people used to sit generally around the same table and chairs for years. In one corner of the room, 6-8 men used to sit. Especially at the beginning, whenever I used to approach this area to take a seat, women used to call my attention and invited me to 'leave them alone, they are men' – as it was considered *inappropriate* for a woman to be involved in 'a man's area'.

This example might be interpreted as way to reflect on what scholars define as ‘using the body as instrument for knowledge’ (Crang, 2003). This expression refers to the use of the self – feelings, moods, and emotions, reactions – to gain insights into the research. This also includes various aspects of the body, such as relations in the space, clothing, etc. Similarly, my gender played an important role in determining the use of space in the setting for participant observation, and this intersected with my personal affective response on the gender role I needed to conform to or reject. This was also confirmed by the types of themes raised by participants. Female participants supposed I should be interested in baking, cooking, cleaning, and gardening; and male participants used to ignore my point of view when debating politics, or important issues that they would call ‘men’s issues’.

In both cases, I was motivated by an ambivalent desire: a desire for closeness and distance. Sometimes, I wished to conform to their gender expectations and ‘act’ as a ‘proper girl’, remaining in the female corner, talking with women and asking them about their knowledge of these themes. I enjoyed performing this role, especially when they used to say ‘oh yeah, you like to cook, you are like one of us, then distancing themselves from those who ‘are not into cooking food’. However, sometime I didn’t fit in with this role at all. Particularly when it implied certain limitations. Therefore, on some occasions, I chose to approach the ‘men’s corner’, take a seat in between them, both physically and metaphorically, sharing my point of views, some of my beliefs, demonstrating my expertise even in ‘men’s type of conversations’ – such as on politics, economics, international relations – and being treated with both deference and respect by females and males alike.

Sometimes, I emphasized my desire to focus on my career rather than having a family; to the disappointment of some of the women, who recognized similarities between myself and their English grand-daughters. Apparently, for them, it was not common to hear this from an Italian female’s perspective, revealing their lack of knowledge around developments in female emancipation that had occurred in Italy, in the intervening years.

### *3.5.6 Religion: access to catholic and protestant culture*

When I realized that religious identity was very important to some of my participants, I began to share this particular aspect of my identity with them. Growing up, I was continuously negotiating my position in-between relation to Protestant and Catholic



belonging. Having a Catholic mother and a Protestant father, I grew up learning about the differences between the two and having access to both cultural systems. This appeared to be a very useful tool when discussing religion and religious belonging amongst Italian migrants with my participants, as the respect for diversity was already embedded in my values and reflected in my code of behaviors.

### *3.5.7 Relationships with places*

I often shared with my participants my attachment to the place where I come from, but I have always identified with Rome, as having lived and studied there for the duration of my study (the 7 years in Italy necessary to become a chartered psychologist). Some of them have lived in Portsmouth, where I also lived for a year. Therefore, I also shared my attachment to British culture. Having lived in Brussels and Denmark, I often described myself as a European citizen. Moreover, I shared that my motivation to be mobile across different countries derives from the wish to know different places, and this kind of discourse generated reciprocal interest in each other's stories.

### *3.5.8 Personal point of view on research practice*

As stated in the introduction section of this chapter, my ethnographic practices has been informed by ideas developed in anthropology, according to which researcher and participants are equally involved in the production of knowledge (Geertz, 2008). Claiming subjectivity in the production of knowledge and the authorial status of the ethnographer in the field (Geertz and Marcus, 1986), I avoided the process to distancing the 'other' (Fabian, 2014). I often engaged in conversation with my research participants, opening up myself by expressing my own point of view; and often shared genuine understandings with them. For the duration of the fieldwork, I felt I knew about them – as much as they had come to know me. The process of data collection was a dual and reciprocal exchange of perspectives, which enabled a high level of intimacy, and co-production of meanings between researcher and participants. I conceived data as generated by the encounter *between* the researcher and the participants, as situated in the social and cultural context in which the ethnographic encounter took place (Hastrup, 1987; Tedlock, 1991; Hastrup, 1992). I believe that self and the other are inextricably involved in a dialectical process (Fabian, 1990). Therefore, the findings of this project are the product of the interaction between myself, as the researcher with all the characteristics mentioned

above, and my participants, within the relationship we built in the given time and particular contexts. The relationship between the researcher and participants played a major role in the level of detail and information acquired and, therefore, the co-construction of meanings that took place is unique and may not be replicable or generalizable.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

#### **3.6.1 Process**

Drafting the methodological chapter as soon as the fieldwork was conducted, gave me the opportunity to reflect on the way I conducted my research project: the relationships built with participants, the way I negotiated consent, and strategies adopted during the data collection. In doing so, I used my field note diary as a data source. Subsequently, I used the recorded interviews as a resource to draft the data chapters.

Field notes, material acquired from participant observations and the ethnographic interviews conducted during the fieldwork, were analyzed and used to enhance understanding of the research project as part of the ethnographic documentation process. The analysis of visual material in this research included: photographs and videos, both in private or public domains. This visual material also included some other elements that the participants chose to show to me (i.e., personal photographs, maps of the city, and so forth). Other memories, thoughts, reflections and interpretations emerged when I analyzed the audio-recorded conversations and reviewed the photographs. Photographs of domestic objects or home layouts – taken or exhibited during the research encounter – enabled me to conduct a detailed post-fieldwork analysis. This project adopted a thematic approach to analyzing the data, and I elaborate on this in the section that follows.

#### **3.6.2 Thematic analyses**

Within qualitative research, it is widely accepted that thematic analyses is a comprehensive process of analysis that generates cross-references and inter-linkages amongst emergent themes (Hayes, 1997). Thematic analyses is used to generate classification or patterns (Boyatzis, 1998), and it has been suggested that it can provide a logical chain of evidence. Therefore, it can give the most appropriate explanation for meanings situated in context (Hatch, 2002; Creswell *et al.*, 2003;

Alhojailan, 2012). Moreover, its' strength is often said to reside in its flexibility, which enables the researcher to use it both inductively and deductively (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

My research employs an *inductive* or 'bottom-up' approach to generating new knowledge (Ormston *et al.*, 2014). This refers to process according to which the researcher does not have a hypotheses prior the data collected. Instead, the understanding of the themes are grounded in the data (Ormston *et al.*, 2014). According to Patton (2005), researchers tend to adopt this approach to ensure that themes are linked to the data. This process may not be driven by a scholar's interest in the area of research, such as they may not be able to fit data into a pre-existent coding frame. As said above, the process is data driven, rather than analysis driven (Hayes, 1997; Boyatzis, 1998).

In line with Welsh (2002), I believe that software alone can't necessarily ensure the reliability and validity of data analysis and, therefore, I chose to conduct a manual analysis of the data, rather than use computer-based methods such as NVivo. I conducted a thematic analysis following the procedure illustrated by (Aronson, 1995; Braun and Clarke, 2006). While the former approach offers a pragmatic and synthetic lists of steps to follow to perform a thematic analyses, the latter, articulates a description of these steps, defining them as 'phases'. In the paragraphs that follow, I report some of the phases that I drew on to conduct my data analysis.

### *Phase 1: Familiarizing myself with the data*

While working through my fieldwork, I began by transcribing the recorded interviews. This enabled me to be in control of the audio material from the outset, organizing and labelling the transcribed data in chronological and thematic order. As I quickly became aware of the huge amount of spoken material I had collected, I sought the support of external transcription companies: an English company and an Italian one. Nonetheless, I continued to transcribe some of the material myself, characterized by sensible topics disclosed or by a delirious use of language: a mix of local English accent (called 'Geordie') and Italian dialect. This mix of languages was not understood as being external to the context<sup>30</sup>.

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30 In every interaction the language spoken by participants switched several times, triggered by a number of factors: the presence of someone else in the context of the interaction. to enable

When the prevalent language spoken was English, I sent the transcript to the English company, and afterwards I added in the Italian verbatim. This helped me to familiarize with the material. Some extracts of conversation were translated into English, when required. While undertaking this process, I listened to the audio and edited the transcriptions several times for each participant, identifying themes. The transcript of the conversation helped to set the scene for the understanding and ethnographic interpretation process.

### *Phase 2: Generating initial codes and searching for themes*

I organized data into meaningful thematic groups, collating themes in different files when possible (some data extracts overlapped in several themes). I interrogated the data, reflecting on how to describe and interpret the various emergent themes. Subsequently, I defined areas of interest and identified some preliminary research findings. Through this activity, I was able to generate a thematic working document. From this, I again looked to focus my research, teasing out new insights to continue the thematic analysis of the transcripts. This extended my thematic list and helped me to identify a narrative for each theme across the cases. I then highlighted potential patterns and generated another phase of visual representation (picture frames, mind maps, and comics<sup>31</sup>). Thanks to this process, I had to break down some themes into separate themes, or else synthesize two or more. Sometimes this activity generated sub-themes.

### *Phase 3: Defining and naming the themes: interpretation of data*

In the first instance of the data analysis phase, I examined each interview and interaction individually. Afterwards, I began to identify and follow conversations between the data. Consequently, I generated a narrative of each theme across the cases and situated my data in conversation with the wider literature. I highlighted similarities or comparisons among participants, and identified data that related to the already classified themes, in order to combine related patterns into sub-themes. Finally, I began to build my arguments into the data chapters and their subsections.

### *Producing written texts*

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participation or exclusion, and my participants' familiarity with each language, and so on, as I will illustrate in the course of the data chapters.

<sup>31</sup> Some examples of comics are reported in the Appendix D.

I pieced together themes that emerged from the participants' stories. In doing so, I dedicated more time to reviewing the literature to ground and gain context on the themes I saw emerging, and this enabled me to form a comprehensive picture of my participants' collective experiences. I identified some findings and outcomes that helped to appropriately structure the thesis. Only when the themes were sufficiently defined, was I able to interweave the literature with the findings and formulate statements to develop a clear written story line.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

Participation was based on freely given, informed consent and relationships in line with Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002) and Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice (ASA - Association of Social Anthropologists of UK and Commonwealth, 2011). This study ensured that the anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of the research participants has been respected. During the research process, I continually drew upon principles of respect and relationship building; thus, consent to situate myself within the everyday life activity of research participants was sought and re-affirmed on an on-going basis. Participants' personal details and any other identifiable information they shared during the interviews, have been kept strictly confidential and shared only within the research team for research purpose. Participants decided on their own how often and for how long they could commit to the project.

There was no reason to withhold particular information on the nature of the research from participants. The Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice (ASA- Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth -2011) recognize the right of participants to be made aware that they are under observation. In addition, there was also no reason to provide financial or other kinds of incentives, although participants often appreciated when I brought a symbolic gift along when I visited them in their homes (flowers, chocolates, biscuits), given to thank them and recognise that they were providing their time and effort for the project. On the other hand, when participants decided to meet up in a public place for the interview, I usually paid for the tea or coffee we ordered.

Data confidentiality has been maintained in a number of ways. Data collected will not be shared with acquaintances, family members or professionals working with the participants. Participants' personal data (name, surname, address, biographical

details) and the recorded conversations have been held securely by the researcher and shared only within the research team for research purposes. Electronic data has been stored on a hard drive securely by the researcher. During the dissemination of the findings, personal details and any other identifiable information have been anonymised, so as not to be traced back to individual participants; pseudonyms have been used instead of participant's names, unless specifically requested by participants. Some participants requested for their real names to appear in the dissertation, I aim to respect their will in this regard, without risking the identification of others within the research process.

### *3.7.1 Information Sheets and Consent Form*

The information sheets<sup>32</sup> provided to participants clearly stated the aims and nature of the research project; what participation in the research would entail; an explanation of the risks (if any) and benefits for participants; an explanation of the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the data that would be adhered to; who to speak to if the participants had further questions; and a full explanation of participants' rights as research volunteers. Details on data analysis, such as ownership and dissemination of findings, were also included.

Research participants were asked to sign two hard copies of the Consent Form<sup>33</sup> during the first meeting. The researcher kept one of them, while the other was kept by the participants. Participants were asked to read the form carefully, and to sign to give their consent to their participant in the research. When needed, consent forms were also given in Italian and verbal consent was also accepted to accommodate different literacy levels. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions throughout the research process, and informed consent included the provision that participants' had the right to withdraw from the process at any time, without any adverse consequences. In addition, participants would not be questioned on the reasons why they did not want to continue their participation.

### *3.7.2 Negotiating engagement and consent form for the interviews*

All participants who acquiesced to take part in a semi-structured interview for the research, were given a hard copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form during the meeting, before the interview started. In all cases, I gave them appropriate time

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<sup>32</sup> A copy of the Information Sheet can be found in the Appendix B.

<sup>33</sup> A copy of the Consent Form can be found in the Appendix C.

to read through the Consent Form carefully (about 5-10 minutes), and gave the opportunity to ask me questions, before signing it. In some cases, I sent the documents in advance of our meeting to them by e-mail (or to close relatives, who communicated on their behalf, as the participants didn't have an e-mail address). Both documents – Information Sheet and Consent Form – were available in English and Italian language. I let the participants decide which language they wished to choose. In some cases, when participants told me they were illiterate, I recorded the conversation while reading the documents to them and asked them whether they agreed or not. However, the different levels of education that participants possessed meant that they were not always able to fully comprehend what was being asked of them in the Consent Form, and sometimes I needed to paraphrase what was written in both forms in a simpler way. This ran the risk of not always reporting exactly what was said in these documents. In some cases, the process of soliciting consent proved problematic, as some no longer wished to continue their involvement in the research when I requested for them to sign the Consent Form.

### **3.8 Research participants: socio-demographic information**

In the following section, I discuss the socio-demographic characteristics of the people I worked with. Amongst the older Italian migrants who participated in my study there were female and male participants, with a slightly higher prevalence of females. All participants were of Italian origin, although from different migrant generations. Many were first-generation Italian migrants: they were born in Italy and moved to the UK during their childhood, or younger stage of their life. In only one case, the participant moved to the UK in later life. Some were second-generation Italian migrants: their parents moved to the UK and they have a British nationality. Many were also third-generation Italian migrants: their Italian grandparents migrated to the UK, at least one of their parents was born in the UK, and consequently they have British nationality. In regards to their age, all of them were older than 60 years old, with a prevalence of people aged between 75 and 85 years old. Some of them were younger than 70 and only few were over 90 years old.

Participants came from different regions in Italy, both from the North and the South of the peninsula. Table 2 shows the socio-demographic information of participants who took part in the audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews, after consent was negotiated. I emphasize here that this information only constitutes a part of the

whole, since I conducted participant observation with a larger group of people, as I said in section 3.4.1.

Participants	Gender	Generation	Age	Region of provenience	Profession	Status
P.1	Male	3	72	Toscana	University Professor	Divorced/Remarried
P.2	Female	1	76	Sicilia	Fish&Chips Owner	Married
P.3	Female	1	82	Lazio	Fish&Chips Owner	Widow
P.4	Male	1	78	Lazio	Hairdresser	Married
P.5	Male	1	76	Lazio	Ice-cream seller	Married
P.6	Female	1	80	Lazio	Housewife	Married
P.7	Male	1	70 c.a.	Lazio	Ice cream shop owner	Married
P.8	Female	3	80 c.a.	Lazio	Ice-cream shop owner	Widow
P.9	Female	3	70 c.a.	Lazio	Ice-cream shop owner	Married
P.10	Female	1	92	Piemonte	Housewife	Widow
P.11	Female	1	85 c.a.	Lazio	Fish&Chips Owner	Widow
P.12	Female	1	85	Campania	Ice-cream seller	Widow
P.13	Male	1	86	Emilia Romagna	Restaurant Owner	Divorced/Remarried
P.14	Female	1	94	Campania	Housewife	Widow/Remarried
P.15	Male	1	65 c.a.	Toscana	Restaurant Owner	Divorced/Remarried
P.16	Male	1	74	Marche	Chef in Hotel	Married
P.17	Female	1	70 c.a.	Liguria	Housewife	Widow
P.18	Female	3	62	Lazio	Coffee shop Owner	Married
P.19	Female	3	80 c.a.	Toscana	Coffee shop Owner	Married
P.20	Female	2	70 c.a.	Toscana	Coffee shop Owner	Widow
P.21	Male	1	80 c.a.	Abruzzo	Fish&Chips Owner	Married
P.22	Female	2	80 c.a.	Lazio	Ice-cream seller	Widow
P.23	Female	1	75 c.a.	Lazio	Ice-cream seller	Widow
P.24	Male	2	63	Lazio	Photographer	Divorced
P.25	Female	1	70 c.a.	Puglia	Housewife	Married
P.26	Female	1	80 c.a.	Puglia	Housewife	Not married
P.27	Female	1	80 c.a.	Lazio	Housewife	Widow

Table 2 *Participant socio-demographic information (Source: Author, 2018)*

Amongst the 27 participants, 18 were female and 9 male. Most were first-generation migrants (19), 3 were second-generation, and 5 were third-generation. All participants were older than 60 years old: 3 participants were between 60 and 70 years old; 11 between 70 and 80 years old; 11 between 80 and 90; and only 2 were older than 90.

Table 2 includes the participants' regions of origin in Italy: 8 participants came from Northern regions such as Tuscany, Piemonte, Liguria, Marche, with prevalence of people from Tuscany; the other 19 participants came from the South of Italy: mostly from Lazio region, some from Campania, Puglia, Sicilia, and Abruzzo (see Figure 2).

Table 2 also shows the participants current or past professions. Most of them belonged to the food sector, owning coffee shops, fish and chips shops or



restaurants. Some of them worked as mobile ice-cream vendors. It must be acknowledged that some, especially the first-generation migrants, started their career being ice-cream sellers and only after some years managed to own a business. Some, especially those of the second- or third-generation, inherited coffee shops from their parents or grandparents. A number of participants were involved in other sectors: one is Professor at a local University and one is a photographer. A gender pattern can be seen for the housewives. Some of them were married to English men and came to the UK for this reason. Regarding their marital status: some of the participants were married, some were widowed, and some divorced and had remarried. Only one participant had never married.

For the purpose of the study, it was also important to gather data about their residence in the UK. None of them actually live in the city center of Newcastle upon Tyne, but most live in the areas around the city: some in Jesmond and Heaton; some in Gateshead and Ponteland; some in places on the South of the river Tyne like Jarrow and Penshaw; and others on the coast in places like Whitley Bay, Seaton Delaval and Blyth. Most of the participants who took part in the interview lived in Ponteland (8) and Jarrow (6). Only in Chapter 4, I reveal the neighborhood they inhabit to address the diversity of the population, whereas I avoid this information in the further Chapters for protecting confidentiality of research participants.

In only two cases was I not able to give the area of residence. This was due to the fact that I wasn't invited to meet the participants in their own houses as I was in other cases; instead the interviews took place in public places. In one case, the participant was also the owner of the restaurant where he decided to meet me. In another case, the participant decided to meet me in a coffee shop in the city center where he used to go very often. This choice by the participants may potentially be due to the fact that they didn't want to share this information with me, or that it might not be appropriate for me to go with them to their home, given their gender (both male) or because they don't socialize in these private spaces. Moreover, I didn't think to ask where their home was, since during the interviews their own dwellings, or neighborhoods didn't emerge as relevant to these two participants in their narratives.

The time of arrival in the UK was also a critical aspect to consider, in order to account for some of the experiences the migrants had. Participants reported that they

experienced different social and cultural environments reflecting the historical context in the country of arrival. I will explore this theme in more detail in Chapter 7.

To conclude, this Chapter illustrated the methodological practices with a high level of details. This was crucial to include as it sets the scene for the next data Chapters and contextualizes the arguments build up in the dissertation.

## **Chapter 4. Older Migrants' Negotiation of Belonging**

### **4.1 Introduction: Highlighting the Diversity in Older Migrants' Relationship with Places**

As explained in Chapter 2, the theme of 'diversity within' the group of older migrants has received a great deal of attention in ageing studies (Warnes *et al.*, 1999; Warnes *et al.*, 2004; Torres, 2006). Scholars looking at the intersection between ageing and migration (Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015; Zubair and Norris, 2015) highlighted how in assuming that older migrants have similar characteristics due to their shared background, it has been taken for granted that ethnicity determines identity. That is to say that, the simple categorization of older migrants only in terms of ethnicity does not reflect the complexity of ageing and the experiences of older age (Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015; Zubair and Norris, 2015). Therefore, further research is needed to explore the extent to which heterogeneity 'within the group' of ageing migrants is determined.

Previous research illustrated that diversity of ageing migrants depends on different factors: social and economic status; the cultural background derived from the region of provenance (Warnes *et al.*, 1999); and the age at which migration took place (Warnes *et al.*, 2004). Whilst Warnes (2004) indicated that the reason for migrating (such as labour migration or family relocation) constitutes a further diversity, Torres (2009) remarked on the importance of also considering involuntary migration (such as in the case of older refugees). In line with these contributions, the data collected during the fieldwork demonstrate the heterogeneity of the older Italians who participated in my research in several ways. As observed in the socio-demographic information of participants reported in Chapter 3, the diversity amongst the group is comprised of: the age range (older adults of 60 years old up to those aged about 94); gender (a mix of female and male participants); different socio-economic status (ranging from the very affluent to the more deprived); the generation of migration (first, second and third generation migrants); and, the cultural background derived from the region of provenance (northern or southern Italy). Moreover, I argue that there is a further aspect to consider when determining the heterogeneity within the group of ageing migrants, such as the relationship established with places in later life.

According to Phillipson (2015), movements across nations, the maintenance of transnational ties, relationships with others, the nature of communities, and how all these factors change over time as people move through life have to be considered when looking at the diversity of ageing migrants. In this respect, the recent typology of older migrants suggested by King *et al.* (2017) highlights a range of different aspects of this experience, including: older people left behind by migration; older family members joining migrants; affluent and retired international migrants; older economic migrants; older returning migrants; and, ageing-in-place migrants (King *et al.*, 2017). According to this viewpoint, researchers need to take into account ageing migrants' relationship with 'home', abroad, or a transnational mix as having an impact on vulnerability or positive ageing and well-being in later life.

Drawing on these ideas, and to grasp the diversity of ageing in the context of migration, the goal of this chapter is to explore the meanings associated with the places inhabited by older Italian migrants during their lifetime. Hence, I aim to highlight these aspects as they intersect with ageing (as a process) and older age (as a stage of life) in the context of migration. To do so, I focus on the articulation of identity, in order to shed light on the sense of attachment to places—or the lack of it. As explained in Chapter 1, this will help to identify the conditions which enable this group of people to experience positive ageing in the context of migration, or to question whether they should age elsewhere. The figure below Figure 4 illustrates the focus of Chapter 4: the concept of place identity will be unpacked thanks to participants' interpretation of it.

Sense of home: Place Identity



Figure 4 *Focus on Place Identity*

At the end of this chapter, this diagram will show what are the elements that constitute place identity, shaping a 'sense of home' in the context of migration.

At the same time, as this is the first empirical chapter of the dissertation, I pursue a contingent goal which is to introduce aspects of the life stories of some of the participants who took part in my research. Eleven participants are presented in this chapter, as representatives of the larger number recruited for this study. These 11 participants differ in terms of: generation (2 participants are second and third generation Italian migrants, while the other 9 are ageing migrants); gender (4 male and 7 female); region of provenience in Italy (7 originated from the South of Italy, 4 are from the North of Italy<sup>34</sup>). Moreover, as it will be clearer later, these participants differ in terms of engagement within the community setting where I conducted my participant observation. Such as, while 7 are regular members of it, the other 4, do not attend it. For these reasons, I consider the 11 participant introduced in the chapter as representative of the population of those who participated to my research.

This chapter has three sections: firstly, I focus on how the subjective articulation of identification with places inhabited provided a 'sense of home', or a lack of it, feeling an 'other'; secondly, I illustrate how the sense of identification with places shaped different conceptions of ageing in the context of migration; thirdly, the social and formal practices of identification and the politics of migration will be presented to discuss how the challenges of ageing in the context of migration change over time. These thematic pillars show that the heterogeneity of the older Italian migrants with whom I worked pertains to the identification with the places they inhabited, and that this might be considered a facilitator of positive ageing in the context of migration.

## **4.2 Negotiation of Belonging across Migrants' Generations**

### **4.2.1 *Being a "mix of both"***

Alfredo was one of the first participants recruited for my research. I was in contact with him before starting my data collection through one of his friends, a local librarian, who offered to help contact potential participants while I was conducting my context-based study in Newcastle Public Library (as explained in Chapter 3). After we exchanged a few e-mails, Alfredo invited me to his house in Newcastle for an interview that lasted for a few hours. Alfredo had been a professor at a local university. He was 72 years old, and an English citizen of Italian migrant background, as he was born in the UK, like his parents. His grandfather, who migrated from Tuscany, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, settled in the North East and went on

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<sup>34</sup> See Figure 2

to own a coffee shop in a village near Newcastle. At the beginning of the interview, Alfredo said:

‘Well, I am confused, that’s the starting point, I’m confused, ‘cause I’m not sure what I am. In Italy now, in my village, in the district, I’m sort of known as the English relative. I’m the English cousin, right? I’m more English. I’m not fully Italian, as I don’t speak Italian fluently, but I’m accepted. But, when I’m here, I’m not English, I’m the Italian. I am always the Italian. I, most of us, are completely confused (*laughing*), really mixed up, yeah, I think most of us feel like that.’

(Alfredo, Jesmond<sup>35</sup>, July 2015)

Alfredo’s everyday notion of identity is represented by his citizenship (according to his passport he is British), as well as by the inherited affiliation (such as his group of ancestors, as Italian migrants in the UK). Alfredo explained that the subjective articulation of identity is given by the interpretation of external social influences, and mediated by the way he feels he belongs, or not, to an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1991). In migration studies, this expression refers to Anderson’s definition of a nation (1991) according to geo-political boundaries, and in which the population has a sense of peoplehood (in Alfredo’s example, this refers to ‘the Italians’ and ‘the English’). In line with this, Alfredo’s attempt to describe an ethnic sense of belonging has been challenged by both the society in which he was born, and the groups with which he socialized. This is because he perceived that he is considered an ‘other’ in both contexts. Nonetheless, despite his Italian language proficiencies, he feels accepted by the ‘imagined community’ of his ancestors, and therefore this helps to negotiate his dual sense of identity.

Similarly, I considered Mario, who was 63 years old and a second generation Italian. His parents were both Italian and had migrated from Lazio in the 1950s. They moved to Scotland with a work permit, and four years later decided to move to Newcastle, where Mario was born. Mario was the first person I met on the flight from Rome, when I first moved to Newcastle. Several months later, I interviewed him on a Sunday at lunch time in his mother’s house in Gateshead. In the interview, Mario said:

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<sup>35</sup> As I said in Chapter 3, I report the local area in Newcastle where the participants live. This aim to illustrate the diversity of the population based on neighbourhood of Newcastle. However, I avoid this information in the chapters that will follow to preserve confidentiality.

'My sense of identity is a bit *'intruvugliato'*. Do you know this word? Is it Italian? No? (Laughing) Maybe it's dialect! Well, it means that it is complex, confused, because I feel both Italian and English. But also neither of them, purely. I feel something else. So I'm nowhere. Despite the fact that I was born in England, I was educated here as an Italian, so differently. Everything is different if you're a son of Italian migrants: the food you eat; the rules you have at home, that my schoolmates didn't have; the school you attend, as I was in a Catholic school. In England, you know, the majority of people attend the Church of England. In the school, I was the only Italian as all the others were Irish, so again, another marginalization. We were a minority here. The more you grow older, the more you are looked at as an outsider, everywhere.'

(Mario, Gateshead, July 2015)

Mario's example shows how complex it is to define clearly what constitutes a sense of belonging to an ethnic identity from the perspective of a British born citizen, with an Italian migrant family. In the cases of Mario and Alfredo, social relations were used as resources for self-understanding. These two older adults identified themselves with their familiar surroundings both in the UK and Italy (feeling 'a mix of both'), but they perceived these surroundings as strangely unfamiliar ('I'm nowhere', 'never purely', 'I'm always an outsider'). However, whilst in Alfredo's case his sense of rootlessness was linked to the people with whom he socialized and their interpretation of him ('the Italians think I'm British, the English consider me as an Italian'), in Mario's case his sense of detachment was due to the role played by institutions and primary sources of socialization (such as family, school and religious groups). Since he was a child, these had forged his personal sense of identity, and became accentuated in later life ('the more you grow older, the more you are looked at as an outsider, everywhere'). These two small examples help demonstrate how a sense of difference amongst people from an ethnic minority background can continue, sometimes, throughout the ageing process, constituting the basis for a sense of 'othering' in older age.

In addition, whereas Alfredo reported a lack of knowledge of Italian, Mario revealed his familiarity with a local Italian dialect, as illustrated by the expression quoted above. This relates to an archaic linguistic expression that I was unable to understand in the first instance, despite my background (as detailed in the reflexive

attention to the role of the researcher reported in Chapter 3). Hence, the expression that Mario thought was 'Italian', was not recognized by 'contemporary Italians', as our interaction revealed. As such, Mario's articulation of belonging may be interpreted as adopting the concept of 'in-betweenness' (Bhabha, 1994). This expression from literature on post-colonialism refers to the feeling of being in a liminal space across different cultures (Bhabha, 1994) which impacts on the articulation of identity. In this example, it reveals the layers of belonging, positioning the participant in a hybrid place, as generated by our research encounter. Thus, it highlighted the liminal space between the Italian and non-Italian language spoken by the participant. Therefore, this interaction might be considered as similar of what Ganga and Scott (2006) highlighted as 'diversity in proximity', such as the ability of recognizing, from an 'insider' perspective, what are the differences that divide researcher and participants, as explained in Chapter 3.

By invoking the examples of Alfredo and Mario, I have introduced how the negotiation of belonging and hybrid identity was often articulated by older second or third generation Italian migrants to me. To unpack the ageing migrants' articulation of their identity further, I suggest considering the case of Teresa. Teresa is an older woman in her mid-seventies from Lazio. She moved to Newcastle in the 1960s, when she was about 20 years old after marrying Michael, a second-generation Italian, whose family lived in Newcastle. Michael's family used to visit the Italian village every summer, and on one of these occasions, Teresa and Michael met. Teresa is now a widow and was reflecting on her affective bonds with places:

'Of course, you feel you belong to both. Therefore, you always feel between two fires, as part of your family is here [UK] and part still there [Italy]. Your heart is divided in two. You want to be both here and there, but...how? My brother lives in my old family house. And I would love to spend time with him, as I know that we are older and we won't live for much longer. But, on the other hand, part of my new family is here. My three children live in Newcastle, and I have to look after my grandchildren. So what can I really do?'

(Teresa, translated into English, March 2016)

This extract reveals Teresa's emotional bonds with her country of provenance and her country of migration, both of which have shaped her sense of identification with



places in later life. Her dual sense of identity led to the dilemma that many of the participants had experienced: being 'home', 'abroad'. Hence, in Teresa's extract, as in the example of Mario above, we can find the feeling of 'in-betweenness' (Bhabha, 1994). This feeling materializes in the idiomatic expression 'living between two fires', as social ties are seen as the driving forces of the experience of ageing across countries in later life. The feeling of being in-between may have influenced her production of cultural meanings, such as having a hybrid sense of identity, as well as her dual attachment and dual sense of belonging. Thus, Teresa felt that she is needed in her adopted country, where she is ageing, given her role as carer for her grandchildren. At the same time, she was also tempted to spend her older age with her brother in the country of provenance, Italy, a desire which was accentuated by envisioning the end of life in older age. Furthermore, Teresa's life story raises awareness of the maintenance of affective bonds with a place prior to migration, given family bonds, has been passed on through the generations. This is because her husband's family of first generation migrants travelled between countries every summer. Thus, we may deduce that, for this specific case, the maintenance of transnational ties and the attachment to the home country pre-migration were cultural embedded in this family setting. I illustrate further this point in Chapter 5.

These three examples introduce the overall argument of this chapter, which is that the diversity within the group being studied is the relationships established with places in later life. The sense of belonging to an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991) is given by the extent to which one feels accepted by local people and the role played by sources of socialization (family, school, religious groups, social groups, etc.). Hence, Alfredo, Mario and Teresa perceived themselves to be regarded as 'a mix of both' cultures, and in doing so they expressed the feeling of 'in-betweenness' (Bhabha, 1994). However, on the one hand, for Alfredo and Mario, this generated an articulation of identity as being an 'other'. In the case of Mario, despite having been born and then ageing in Newcastle this perception became accentuated in later life. On the other hand, for Alfredo and Teresa, the feeling of being socially connected to family members and communities, both in Italy and in England, was interpreted as a dual sense of identity. Therefore, these older adults may have adopted what Vertovec (2009) defines as a 'bifocal habitus', as articulated in Chapter 1, such as a dual frame of reference, due to an on-going comparison between 'home' and 'abroad', and always hovering somewhere in between. But this point itself leads to a

further question that demands attention: what is 'home' and what is 'abroad' from an ageing migrant's perspective? To answer this, I turn to the examples of Lucia, Carolina and Miranda that illustrate the facilitators of a 'sense of home' in the context of migration.

#### *4.2.2 Ageing migrants' 'sense of home'*

In this next section, I seek to explore ageing migrant's articulation of identity by their definition of a 'sense of home' in the context of migration. In so doing, I rely on data from participants who came to Newcastle as young adults in the 1950s or thereafter. These three ageing migrants have in common their active participation in a leisure centre for older Italian migrants in Newcastle, such as the site where I conducted the majority of my participant observation.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the data presented in this section are different from those generated during the interviews, as illustrated above, but extracted from my fieldwork diary, based on informal conversations that contributed to my understanding.

One representative of this group of people is Mrs. Lucia, who is the mother of the participant introduced above, Mario. She was 84 years old and, as mentioned, had migrated from Lazio in 1950 when she was 18 years old. She worked as a nanny in Scotland for four years for an Italian-Scottish family, and afterwards moved to Newcastle with her Italian husband. They ran a fish and chip shop throughout their working lives. At the time of the interview, Lucia was an older widow, and she introduced me to the community of older Italian migrants. She attended the leisure centre on a weekly basis, as a leading member, and was responsible for recording the attendance of club members. Once I had gotten to know her in the centre, she articulated her sense of identity as follows:

'I have always been happy to have migrated. I felt a bit sad to leave my family when I was young, but now my home is here in the UK. Here, I have my two children. One lives opposite my house, and we are used to spending most of the time together. The other lives in another English city, but still come to visit me often. My three grandchildren are British. So, of course, I feel I belong here.'

(Lucia, translated into English, October 2015)

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<sup>36</sup> This centre for older Italian migrants is defined by the participants as 'Club' or 'Italian association', among others terms.

In retrospectively interpreting the process of her migration, Lucia showed a certain degree of happiness for the choice she made at a younger age. In contrast to the examples above, Lucia in this conversation, does not reveal complexity in defining her sense of identity, as she clearly articulates her sense of belonging with the place she inhabits in later life due to the proximity of her family members. This provided her with a feeling of social embeddedness in the context of migration, such as a sense of 'rootedness', fostered by family ties. To manifest a sense of place attachment to the country of destination and identification with the places inhabited Lucia adopted the concept of 'home'. As explained in Chapter 1, the 'homing-desire' (Brah, 1996), or 'reconstruct[ion of] a home away from home' (Clifford, 1997) is a powerful motif in the literature on migration (Gilroy, 2000) and it refers to the desire of (re)constituting spaces that provide security in the context of migration. Similarly, in geography, homes are physical but also operate on social and symbolic levels, since the notion of 'home' is commonly associated with the concept of belonging to a place (Tuan, 1975).

Likewise, a 'sense of home' due to social relations and family ties was a crucial foundation for the sense of belonging seen in the participant named Carolina. Carolina was an older widow aged 82 from Campania, and had migrated to the UK as a labour migrant. She had also worked in a fish and chip shop for most of her life. When I asked Carolina about her sense of home, she answered:

'You know how many years we are here? I moved here in 1957. The amount of time that I have spent in the UK is longer than that I spent in Italy. Of course my sense of home is in the UK. My children are here, my grandchildren, too. [...] And I feel English, yes, because in Italy the Italians are not polite, they do not respect the queue when you are in the shops, while here there is more order.'

(Carolina, translated into English, December 2015)

From Carolina's point of view, a natural consequence of the time spent abroad is the reconstruction of a 'sense of home' in later life in the context of migration. Therefore, her sense of identity is not bound to the place where she was born but to the one to which she migrated. This is often expressed by small details of everyday life by my participants. So, in Carolina's case for instance, when she talked about queueing she revealed that she identified more with English everyday practices rather than Italian

ones. It seems that her sense of belonging has been shaped by identification with the social-cultural practices of her adopted homeland.

To add a further analytical point, all the examples presented so far help to re-define ethnic identity amongst an older migrant population. This is because these people suggest that a sense of belonging to an ethnic identity is not created only from phenotypical traits (Torres, 2015) such as nationality, mother tongue, place of birth, citizenship, and so forth; rather, it is socially constructed and changes over time. Therefore, these data show how the notion of ethnicity negotiated by Italian older people in the context of my ethnography aligns with the social gerontologists' conception of it (Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015; Zubair and Norris, 2015). According to the definition of ethnicity from a constructivist perspective (Torres, 2015), this is defined as not being neither static nor essential, to be observed and described objectively, as conceived by the essentialist perspective of ethnicity. Instead, ethnicity is understood as a dynamic and evolving characteristic of individuals which is created, negotiated, shaped and transformed by individual actions, and is the product of contact and interaction between people. Indeed, the reported examples have shown how a sense of ethnic identity was shaped by the social experiences of ageing in the context of migration, and identification with these places. This was evident in the examples of Alfredo and Mario, third and second generation Italian, that did not feel fully British but a mix of both; and from the three examples of ageing migrants' – Lucia and Carolina- who feel more identified with the adopted country despite their national identity.

Moreover, similar to the example of Teresa and Lucia, the extract from Carolina illustrates that her articulation of belonging is constructed through the presence of her family members in places inhabited. However, this example adds to the previous point, in that the length of time spent in the context of migration also contributes to building a feeling of social embeddedness. In speaking on behalf of many in the same situation, Carolina suggested that it is taken for granted that ageing Italian migrants feel at home in the context of migration.

In this regard, also Miranda, an older widow in her 80s, confirmed these assumptions. Originally from Liguria, she moved to Newcastle in 1957 with her Italian husband, who had family members already working in the city. Miranda worked all

her life in an Italian coffee shop, and when I asked her about a sense of home she said:

‘Before, I felt a foreigner here. When I went to Italy on holiday, I felt a foreigner there, too. But now, I feel at home here. It has been more than 60 years that I’ve lived here. Every time I travel abroad I can’t wait to come back, to meet my family and friends here. Like those in this Club, for example, they are my family too in a sense.’

(Miranda, translated into English, March 2016)

Miranda’s negotiation of belonging seems to have been questioned during her previous stages of life, as she felt like a foreigner in both places. This might be similar to what was reported by the participants of second or third Italian generation, Alfredo and Mario, reported above. Nonetheless, she stated with a certain degree of confidence that, in later life, she identified herself with the place she now inhabits. Similar to the examples above, she asserts that her family ties and the length of time since leaving Italy were both facilitators in creating her ‘sense of home’ in Newcastle rather than Italy.

From these three examples, it is clear that these older Italian migrants have established a positive relationship with the places they inhabited in later life, as they identified a ‘sense of home’ in the context of migration. Therefore, these data add to the previous key points about how forms of socialization in later life foster a sense of belonging to places inhabited.

Miranda, as well as the two older women interviewed, was a member of the leisure centre for older Italian migrants, as said above. This centre was identified as an important place in older age for encouraging social ties. This appeared to be a shared value amongst the majority of the participants interviewed who were engaged in the same community setting, and, during my participant observation I witnessed close friendship, solidarity, and mutual support amongst its members. Hence, many of the regular attendees of the Italian Club felt that it offers them an opportunity to belong to a community, and therefore this Club took centre stage in some of their lives, providing them with experiences of belonging and social connectedness outside their family setting.

The importance of a network of supportive relationship as acting as a practical resource in later life has been highlighted in the study of ageing (Walsh and O'shea, 2008; Walsh *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, these data are in line with different studies aiming at exploring older migrants' sense of home by communities' settings that helped re-establishing connections with place of destination. For example, the research of Qian *et al.* (2011) was conducted in a community setting in the city of Guangzhou, China. The centre helped migrants establish social relationships and avoid feelings of rootlessness, through providing recreational activities. This public place, in its physical and social setting, enhanced migrants' emotional bonds and processes of self-identification with the city. The latter was founded with providing a feeling of being at 'home'.

In the literature on ageing at the intersection with migration, social aspects of the environment, such as the community setting where ageing migrants are able to socialize, are described as being extremely important for improving the life of older migrants (Caglar, 2006). For example, in Fortier (2006) the Centre Scalabrini, a socialization space for the Italian community in London, is described as reinforcing a communal migrant identity, and constituting older Italian migrants' home. Similarly, a recent study conducted within cultural, political and religious voluntary associations for older Turkish migrants in Vienna shows the vital role of communities setting in providing a feeling of social embeddedness in later life (Palmberger, 2017). In line with the findings of these research mentioned above, Miranda defined the members of the Italian Club as 'a sort of family', and similarly many other participants have showed their feeling of rootedness and belonging to the context of migration through their membership to the Club. Moreover, my findings add to the existing knowledge in this respect (Caglar, 2006; Fortier, 2006; Palmberger, 2017) that social embeddedness provides place attachment; that is, these participants considered that the community setting was one of the driving forces linking them to the place inhabited in the context of migration (as Miranda said, she could not wait to go back to the Bingo place when abroad).

By growing older away from their place of birth, my participants' sense of embeddedness in and belonging to places inhabited has been reinforced through family ties in Newcastle and, more broadly, through social aspects of their local environment. Therefore, it might be argued that social aspects of the environment, as facilitators for a 'sense of home' in the context of migration enable these participants

to experience positive ageing. As I said in Chapter 1 and 2, by positive ageing in the context of migration, I mean the individual perceptions of having reconstructing a sense of 'being in place' (Rowles, 2017). This is in evidence in the examples of Lucia, Miranda, and Carolina where they talk about having established a 'sense of home' by social and physical aspects of the environment. This point will be explored in more details in Chapter 6. However, the heterogeneity within this group of ageing migrants pertains to contrasting viewpoints in this respect. Despite sharing a degree of happiness in having migrated from Italy, family ties, length of residence, and the ability to socialize with other Italian migrants, some of the participants I worked with did not share the sense of belonging described above. Instead, they questioned their sense of belonging to the context of migration in later life.

#### *4.2.3 The feeling of not belonging in the context of migration*

Filomena was a first generation Italian aged 84 from Campania, and had moved to Newcastle after the Second World War, with a work permit. From a well-to-do peasant family, she was the only child amongst her siblings who decided to migrate. She said that she took this decision as the rural life was too hard for her, and as she had always been 'very skinny' as a young girl. By this she meant that the cultural system in which she was born considered her not strong enough for hard laborious work in the countryside. She preferred to sew, and afterwards she became a good seamstress. Similarly to some of the previous participants reported above, I met Filomena at the Club where I conducted my participant observation, and I was invited to her house more than once. We used to spend the entire day together, sharing meals. Filomena said that she enjoyed my company during the fieldwork, as she had lived alone since her husband passed away several years before and she rarely had guests. In saying this, she revealed an important point about her everyday life experience of ageing in the context of migration:

'I'm happy to be where I am. I compare myself to my sister in Italy, who is younger than me but looks older. She is always very busy in the countryside, taking care of animals, the huge house, with many relatives. I spend all day without doing much. If I'm tired, I rest; if it's sunny, I go out for a walk. I go out food shopping with my son. Otherwise, I spend my days indoors. [...] But, I always say to myself "From walking in the countryside, I walk on carpets now." So I'm happy to be in the UK, and enjoy a cup of tea, as a proper British lady. [...] Unfortunately, never mind

what you do to have friends, you will always be a foreigner here. Especially when you are not useful any more. Before, when I was younger, everybody in the neighborhood used to knock at this door. I did many clothes for people around. “Filomena, please can you mend this, can you fix that?” I also did a wedding dress for the lady nearby. Before, I was a very popular seamstress, *per un dire*.<sup>37</sup> Well, you know, you grow older and you don’t have the same energy. [...] Then, four years ago, I lost an eye. It was a great loss for me, and I felt discouraged. Recently, I had an infection in the other eye, so I am worried. The problem is that when I walk around, people don’t care about me any longer. Before, they said “hello” to me here, in the streets. Now, as I’m not useful anymore to them, they don’t come here for a cup of tea anymore. [...] So, I said, I have lost an eye, but why don’t they see me, now? That’s why I think: You are always a *forestiera*<sup>38</sup> here.’

(Filomena, Heaton, translated into English, November, 2015)

In retrospectively reinterpreting her experiences of migration, Filomena’s happiness in later life derived from her transition from a rural to a worldly and sophisticated lifestyle, symbolized by the meaning she ascribed to material objects in her house (the change from walking on ‘the land’ in her youth, to ‘the carpet’ in later life). Filomena’s example thus introduces the theme of migration as the accomplishment of an aspirational identity and the material effect of transformation after migration (Basu and Coleman, 2008), that I shall address in greater detail in Chapter 5. As a consequence of this, she articulates her identity as being ‘a British lady’, in the place in which she is growing old and her activities. Filomena also expressed this in direct comparison to her sister, who is still involved in the manual labour duties of the Italian countryside. From Filomena’s perspective, the ‘hard life style’ of the countryside, for which she was considered unsuitable in her youth, is the reason why she migrated from Italy. It is something that has, to her mind, also contributed to the ageing of her sister’s body (‘she looks older than me’) despite her sister being the younger sibling. By this, in a first instance, it appears that Filomena does not replicate the social representation of the ‘rural idyll’ (Walsh *et al.*, 2012; Burholt *et al.*, 2013), such as bucolic and virtuous trope associated to rural life. However, Filomena’s emotional and the idealized ‘rural idyll’ emerges when she reveal her expectation of older age.

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<sup>37</sup> *Per un dire*, means ‘just for saying’, in a modest way.

<sup>38</sup> ‘*Forestiera*’ means ‘foreigner’ in Italian.



Hence, she implicitly compares herself to her sister's ageing, as shaped by the differences determined by the places in which they are growing older ('she is always busy', 'surrounded by relatives'). These refers to the features commonly associated to rural sites: for example in the work of Walsh *et al.* (2012) social visiting in each other's homes was part of daily social contact and interactions. In this respect, the participant, in this example, stressed another side of transformation after migration, namely the vulnerability experienced as an ageing migrant, according to her own perspective. That is to say, Filomena compared her social life during the first years of migration, when her skills as a seamstress enabled her to cultivate social relationships within the local area, with the sense of disengagement from social life that she felt due to the onset of older age. In the past, she felt active in her work and talked proudly of her skills; she was happy to have guests visiting her house. However, in later life she felt ignored by the many people she had met in the neighbourhood, and experienced loneliness, as I witnessed. This shaped her sense of identity in later life, as she felt she was always a 'stranger', despite having done her best to create social bonds when she was younger. Therefore, the sense of a shrinking social network and her perceived social exclusion in later life, due to physical decline, illness, and disability, according to Filomena's perspective, may be linked to the experience of ageing in the context of migration ('you will be always a foreigner here'). Hence, the contingencies of ageing and disability in later life (the loss of her eye) became associated with the new condition of being socially invisible, or not socially recognized by others in the local area.

Filomena's feeling of invisibility is similar to Rowles' notion of 'autobiographical insideness' (Rowles, 1983). As explained in Chapter Two, with this term, the gerontologist refers to awareness of the experiences of places (among others, recognizing people, and being recognized by them) as defining a sense of belonging in later life. Rowles (1983) argued that this feeling, shaping the relationship established with places, influences the process of self-definition and identity among older adults. Filomena reported a recent condition of feeling ignored by people when out in her local neighbourhoods, as she describes lots of involvement in local neighbourhood in younger life. This lack of autobiographical insideness in later life shaped reflections upon her condition of ageing in the context of migration in a period of loss and deprivation, by articulating her sense of not belonging to it. Whether or not the feeling of being marginalized is determined by a different ethnic identity, the

key aspect of this finding is that the participant considered that her place of provenance contributed to her vulnerability in later life. This narrative extract from Filomena's interview evokes a dominant trope amongst scholars in migration and ageing studies defined as 'double jeopardy' which highlights the disadvantages of being both an older adult and a person with a different ethnicity in the context of migration (Fennell *et al.*, 1988; Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015; King *et al.*, 2017).

Therefore, this example reiterates the mainstream trend in social gerontology which frames older people with images of vulnerability, disengagement and withdrawal from society (Fennell *et al.*, 1988), as well as fragility, illness and disability (Ayis *et al.*, 2006). Moreover, this example confirms the risk of exposure to several disadvantages in ageing migrant populations, such as social exclusion (Scharf *et al.*, 2005) and loneliness (Victor *et al.*, 2012), as articulated in Chapter 2. Therefore, Filomena is an example of those migrants facing isolation from their social network due to ageing in the context of migration, like many of this study's participants. The sense of vulnerability that older Italian migrants experience is concerned with the expectations of ageing, linked to growing older in a different environment, and which accentuates the obstacles to interacting within the local communities. Therefore, by remarking that social bonds established in the context of migration are a crucial aspect for ageing migrants' sense of belonging, I stress its importance in experiencing a positive ageing. This introduces the further theme of how the attachment and identification with places inhabited in the context of migration shapes the interpretation of ageing, and determines health and well-being in later life.

### **4.3 How a Sense of Identity Shapes the Idea of Ageing**

#### *4.3.1 Identification with the context of migration*

As illustrated in Chapter 2, research at the intersection of ageing and migration has shown how stereotypical assumptions about older migrants, and emphasis on their problematic condition, can lead to 'othering elderly immigrants' as that they have special needs (Torres, 2006). My work builds on this perspective, and important points of contrast that challenge such stereotypes are also evident in the data collected, as I will show next. In highlighting the diversity within the group of older migrants I worked with, my data show how the concept of ageing may have been altered by the process of migration in different places. In particular, this concerns the sense of isolation, loneliness, and lack of social inclusion, as in the case of Maria.

Maria was born in 1923 in Napoli, and was 94 at the time of the interview. She explained to me that she came from an aristocratic family and had moved to the UK aged 21 with her sister. The two sisters had met two English admirals in the monarch residence, the Royal Palace of Naples, at a post-war gala ceremony to which their family had been invited. Both sisters eventually became engaged to those admirals, and their two marriages were organized for the same day to allow the two sisters to migrate together by train. While her sister stayed in the South of England, Maria continued her journey all the way to Newcastle, where she now lives alone since her husband passed away. I did not meet Maria at the social centre, -she is not attending the community setting- but instead was introduced to her through a contact who knew of my research interests. I arranged to interview her by phone with her son, who lives in the south of England, not with her directly, as her son thought she would not be able to make the arrangements, as she explained during the interview. The morning I arrived at her house a social care worker opened the door. When I had reassured this person about my student references, I had the possibility to talk to Maria, who was very happy to speak Italian after a long time. Touching upon her sense of identity she told me:

‘My sense of belonging, well, it is difficult to make a clear distinction. I renounced my citizenship to marry an English man, but I have always felt an Italian living abroad. Like all the other British people, I also became very reserved. I’m always friendly, but I became a very quiet person, very calm. [...] I had a very calm and good life here, in Britain. I was expecting to have a quiet life when ageing. [...] Now, I cannot walk outdoors on my own, as “it’s dangerous for a person of my age” (imitating voice), as my son said. I spend my time in this house alone. But I reflect, I think, I read, oh, I read a lot. So I don’t need many people around. [...] Here, in Britain I can live a very calm and stable life. Some young person would say that it’s dull, but I’m happy with that. Could you find any better place that gives you this stability in life? I chose to be here. I have stopped here in Newcastle and that’s where I will die. [...] Only a person who comes from Napoli can understand what it means to miss that sea. But you know, this feeling does not help you. You have to detach from that memory, you have to stop comparing, otherwise you don’t live well, you don’t see the opportunities you have around.’

(Maria, translated into English, Ponteland, March 2016)

Maria's negotiation of identity included her national identity, as she described herself as 'an Italian abroad'; however, she defined a sense of affiliation with what she considers to be British manners ('quiet, reserved'). Articulating her sense of self as having become 'British' after migration, this case reveals that the hybrid characteristics of the identity amongst ageing migrants are interwoven with their sense of place in which they are ageing. Hence, Maria's case highlights how the meanings associated with the chosen place to move to, at a younger age, might have had an influence on the expectations of the everyday experiences and practices of ageing. As Torres (2015) suggested, the process of migration itself could alter the conception of ageing amongst older migrants, having had an influence on what it means to experience positive ageing. Hence, Maria emphasized that a 'very calm and stable life' is what she expected from the experience of living in the context of migration. In fact, Maria felt like a 'prisoner of space' (Gilleard *et al.*, 2007) in her domestic environment, given her decreased mobility. Like Filomena in the previous example, Maria also reported a lack of social connectedness in ageing in the context of migration. However, Maria's case differs from Filomena's due to the fact that her potential isolation, loneliness and social exclusion from the local community did not undermine her sense of health and well-being, as she did not define her condition of ageing as problematic ('I don't need many people around'). Nonetheless, this does not necessarily mean that she felt that she belonged or that she had never felt 'othered' in the context in which she was growing old as a migrant, as Filomena did. However, Maria's sense of wellbeing in later life was due to her great sense of identification with places and attachment to them ('could you find any better place'; 'I am stopped in Newcastle and that's where I will die'). This is in line with studies about the relationship between place attachment and a positive interpretation of ageing, as highlighted by several scholars (Gustafson, 2001b; Taylor, 2001; Peace *et al.*, 2005a), which enables a favourable self-image in spite of the contingencies of later life. Therefore, Maria's extract sheds light on the importance of place attachment in later life, amongst ageing migrants, in defining identity and belonging. Maria's explicit warning to avoid comparing different places might have helped her to detach from the place of origin and attach to the places where she lived after migration. Thus, the idea of ageing may be shaped by a comparison of alternative ways of ageing elsewhere, which is what seems to have happened in these two cases. This positively or negatively influenced the participants' sense of well-being:

as shown, a sense of identification with the context of migration might facilitate a positive experience of ageing. This becomes clearer with the example of Sir John.

During my fieldwork, I was engaged in informal conversation with Sir John on different occasions for about seven months. When Sir John agreed to participate in my research, he did not want to reveal his identity in the dissemination of the findings. However, the pseudonym used – chosen together during the research encounter – is not meant to represent a connotation of class. Instead, it is one that my participant wished to use, a wish I respect here. Sir John was a 73 year old retired man from Tuscany who had migrated to the UK in the 1960s to learn English, following work experience in other European countries. He needed a work permit to migrate, and then moved to Newcastle since his older brother was managing a popular Italian restaurant. Sir John then worked there for 40 years, and married an English woman. I interviewed him in an Italian coffee shop in Newcastle city centre which he used to attend regularly. In the extract of conversation that follows, he articulates a sense of identity with both Italy and England, and when asked about the best place to age, he said:

‘I always thought about going back to Italy, one day, but then it was complicated since my wife doesn’t speak Italian. It was not fair to interrupt our children’s education, so we stayed all my working life. Now, I’m retired, I can go back forever, but I feel happier ageing here. It’s nice to go back to Italy for a few weeks, but then when I see some of my old friends they spend the whole day outside the bar, with their chairs. Yes, they have got the blue sky. It’s beautiful to have the blue sky. But they don’t do anything else. Here, I feel active. I am socially engaged with multiple communities: the Italians, the Men’s Club in my local neighborhood, we have a public lecture every month. We continue to learn. [...] So, that’s the problem, you cannot adapt any longer to the mentality of people there. If I had enough money, I would do six months here and six there, but I can’t afford it.’

(Sir John, translated into English, Coffee Shop, January, 2016)

Using the typology of older migrants defined by King *et al.* (2017), Sir John can be considered an older labour migrant who faced the dilemma of whether to ‘return to their country of origin’. As said in Chapter 1, this theme has been highlighted by scholars looking at ageing in the context of migration, who have stressed how ‘the

return' is a major concern for an older Italian population in the UK (Ganga, 2006; Zontini, 2015). In line with this literature, Sir John's interview extract reveals that many life events have occurred to anchor him to the host country including family life, demonstrating how these are never individual choices, as argued by Phillipson (2015). However, his example also show us that in trying to identify the best place in which to grow older, the notion of ageing itself for Sir John has been shaped by the process of migration. This is visible in the comparison of ageing in different ways and the everyday practices embedded in places ('they have the blue sky but spend all day outside the bar, on their chairs' vs. 'we are active, continuing learning'). Being socially engaged with multiple social networks in Newcastle, his sense of wellbeing is broadly related to the social aspects of the environment that enable him to remain active in learning and in the social sphere, as a determinant for ageing in a positive manner. These positive aspects would be missing, he feels, in his country of origin. However, I now move on to consider how the sense of belonging to the context of migration involves not only the social aspects of the environment, but also the political sphere.

#### **4.4 The Sense of Belonging: Social and Political**

Sir John is an example of an older adult who felt socially engaged in the context of migration. When I asked him to articulate his sense of belonging to the places inhabited, he said:

'I feel I am a citizen of this country. Actually, I feel dual, both Italian and English...How can I say? I feel a mix of both. I do not have proof, as I haven't got two passports, but I feel I belong here, as well as in Italy. When I am in Italy, I feel Italian, not a foreigner. When I am here, I feel English, my children are English, and so are my grandchildren. Here, I only regret never asking for citizenship. So, I cannot vote in the political elections at a national level, only the local. They asked me about 20 years ago, but I didn't think it was important at that time. Now it is.'

(Sir John, translated into English, Coffee Shop, January, 2016)

Despite the fact that Sir John highlighted his strong sense of attachment to place of migration, and his sense of identification with it, the same cannot be said in terms of his negotiation of belonging. He remarked on his hybrid identity using the same expression, 'feeling a mix of both', that we have already seen in this chapter

employed by other participants (Alfredo and Mario, presented above, who are respectively third and second generation Italian). Similar to Lucia, Carolina, Miranda and Teresa, as an ageing migrant, Sir John defined his sense of belonging as being socially constructed by the primary group of socialization, such as his English family (my wife is English, my children are English). Furthermore, Sir John had not experienced the feeling of 'being a foreigner', as had Miranda, in both his native country and in the context of migration. On the contrary, he always felt both Italian in Italy and English in the UK. However, despite his subjective sense of belonging, he maintained only one citizenship, Italian. Therefore, Sir John's example shows the juxtaposition between a personal negotiation of belonging and the state's definition of who is entitled to be a full citizen of Britain.

On one hand, in the previous examples the sense of being 'othered' was determined by informal practices of belonging, as mediated by the interpretation of external social influences (the sense of belonging to an imaginary community in Alfredo's example; the sense of 'othering' from the place of birth in Mario's example; the social relations outside the immediate family context for Filomena). On the other hand, Sir John expressed the role of the formal practice of demarking belonging. The claim of nationality and self-determination of ethnicity was challenged by the citizenship, as he could not vote on a national level due to not formally belonging to the UK. As such, he illustrated how political involvement can play a significant role in the social construction of identity amongst some ageing migrants in later life. This is because the desire to be actively engaged in public affairs, made visible by the expression of political choice in this case, can change during the person's life. For Sir John, what was not important in the early stage of migration became essential in later life. Therefore, this example adds an important nuance to the literature on definition of ethnicity amongst ageing migrants (Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015; Zubair and Norris, 2015) in that a sense of identity is an on-going process that changes over time, mediated by external social influences, and articulated by formal and informal practices of belonging.

Another example of how formal and informal practices of belonging influence the sense of identity amongst ageing migrants is the case of Domenico, or also called 'Dominic'. He was a longstanding member of the Club from Abruzzo, aged 82 at the time of the interview. Our research encounter took place in Domenico's house in the

presence of his wife, M.<sup>39</sup> and their grandson G., over Sunday lunch. Domenico recounted that he had left Italy when he was almost 20 years old. First, he was offered a job in the steelworks in Wales, but afterwards he moved to Jarrow, near Newcastle, where he met Maureen, and they have lived there since. The grandson was about 20 years old, and played an important role in the interview, as will be shown in the following extract of conversation. I asked Domenico to articulate his sense of identity, and he replied:

D: I feel Italian, but we have nothing there now. But, of course, you don't lose your identity. I feel an immigrant here. Always.

S: Still now?

D: Well, yes. Because here everybody has always seen me as the Italian.

G: Grandad, still? Because obviously you can't feel a foreigner anymore. At what point did you become... an English..? I don't know how to word it!

M: Well, they know he's Italian, but he's lived here a long time. Everybody knows Dominic in Jarrow, I mean he goes to the Social Club on a Sunday, and all my family is there, my cousins. They all think the world of him. They say "You all right, Dominic? Do you want a drink?" And all this, you know, he enjoys the company. So he is part of the group.

D: Yes, ma dovevo sempre avere il foglio di riconoscimento dalla polizia.<sup>40</sup>

S: Could you please speak in English otherwise they do not follow us?

D: Look at the passport. 'Alien'. Look at the front. Every time, I changed address I had to report to the police, so they'd know where I was. That's the stamp. 'You are an alien, get yourself away'.

G: Oh right Grandad. I see. Simona, one thing you have to see. Grandad was free when he married Nana. Before that he had this little book, like a document. And it's got a massive stamp on it and I always think it's weird

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39 Domenico's wife is 'M'; 'G' is the grandnephew; 'S' is Simona. Despite Domenico's family members not being defined as participants, they both agreed to participate in the interview.

40 This sentence is reported in Italian, to show how some participants used the Italian language strategically with me to exclude somebody else participating in the conversation, as mentioned in Chapter 3. The meaning of the sentence is: 'Yes, but I always had to show my identity card to the police officer!' Moreover, this is an example of research encounter in which family members who were not-participants acted an important role. as stated in 3.4.1



looking at it now, because it says 'The Aliens Department'. So, that was the people who would monitor where Grandad was. So, they had to sign every so often to say he'd stayed in the area. He's not just going around the country. This was in '61, I mean, not only during the War, but even later on. And that was a policy in 1953. Because, now, a world like that is so politically incorrect. You couldn't refer to immigrants as aliens. Could you? No. But, back then they were trying to cause offence by using a word like that<sup>41</sup>.

M: No, they didn't, son, that's right. It's just the connotation of the word that is different. They were aliens. They were Italians, but they were aliens to England. But they were too young to realize they'd put aliens on.'

(Domenico, Jarrow, March 2016)

This example shows the articulation of identity by a first generation Italian migrant, who highlighted that he had been labelled an 'alien' by the nation state, referring to the passport he had during the first years of migration in the UK. The sense of 'otherness', in this case, appears to be connected to the way an institution attributed identity and belonging. The politics of immigration generated and reinforced a sense of difference, according to Domenico's perspective, as he had been monitored and was limited in his freedom of movement around the country.

The concept of 'autobiographical insideness' (Rowles, 1983) that I used above to interpret Filomena's example can also be adopted here in reference to the way in which Domenico's wife articulated his sense of belonging to the local neighbourhood (people say: 'Domenico are you all right? Would you like a drink? So he is part of the group'). Despite the fact that his wife sought to remind him that others wanted to include him socially, he did not feel he belonged, given the formal, politicised, practices of identity. Therefore, despite the experiences of social engagement, integration and acceptance within the local community, these data reveal the multifaceted implications of the politics of migration in later life.

Hence, the powerful definition of 'alien', and the meaning associated with it by an ageing migrant's perspective ('get yourself away') was still impressed in Domenico's

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<sup>41</sup> In this respect, I would like to add here a comment by the proof reader of this dissertation who I wish to remain anonymous. This person added: "It was still called the Aliens Office in the 90's – I worked with international students then and remember how bad it sounded!" I believe this comment can be considered a further evidence of the social and historical context in which this project was conducted.

memory, showing how this is considered a barrier to a sense of identification with the place inhabited after migration. He asserted that he had always felt a foreigner in the place where he had lived for more than 60 years, and had never lost his attachment to his national Italian identity. This theme requires particular attention and I will expand on it in Chapter 7.

To bring this sub-section to a close, I wish to consider a third and final example of how the social aspects of the environment and the politics of migration intersect with the conceptualization of ageing. To do so, I turn to Romina, a first generation Italian migrant from Liguria, and who was 75 when I interviewed her. She moved to the UK when she was in her 20s, to be with her husband Denny, an English man who had passed away several years before I met her. They had met in France when they were both on holiday. After writing to one another for one year, they married and Romina moved to Newcastle. Romina told me that she had to renounce her Italian citizenship, as this was the norm for foreigners marrying English citizens before 1973. I met Romina in the Club where I conducted my participant observation, and after a few months she invited me home for an interview that lasted a few hours. During the interview, Romina explained that her husband was attached to Italy and her native home town, given the many holidays they had spent together there after their marriage. This topic generated a significant narrative from her about the sense of attachment that Romina also had toward the same place. She told me:

‘He was much attached to Italy, although he was English. He wanted his heart to be there. He was happy like a Pope when he was in that sea. So we left it [the urn with his ashes] in the sea, exactly how he wanted. And he is in his element now. I am Italian but I spent all my life here, well, I’m not sure I’m happy in this place. [...] Why am I here? My daughter lives in France. I don’t have many friends. [...] Yes I go to the Club<sup>42</sup>, but once a week for few hours, then? I spend all my days indoors. [...] The first time I saw Sunderland Cemetery, where I also could be buried, I said “My God, I don’t want to be in that cemetery!” [...] I always asked my husband about taking back Italian citizenship, but he never did. He has always said: “Well, one day!” Now he has passed away and I don’t have Italian citizenship anymore! Recently, I had a dispute with my neighbors about the fence that divides our houses. I get really nervous, [...] and I said: “This is the right

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42 Referring to the recreational centre of older Italians where I conducted my fieldwork.

time, I will sell everything and go back to my country!" But then I said, "I no longer have Italian citizenship, so where am I going?" I will always blame my husband for that. I can only go back after life, like him.'

(Romina, Penshaw, translated into English, July 2016)

This extract of conversation highlights a number of key points. In particular, it draws attention to the articulation of identity of Romina as an ageing migrant in later life, shedding light on her relationship with places in envisioning the end of life. This was introduced as she talked about her husband's construction of affective bonds with Italy during their marriage, illustrated by the fact that his last wish was to have his ashes spread in the sea in Italy. This made Romina envision her own end of life, through which she manifested her very low sense of attachment to the place where she lives, revealing herself to be in the process of thinking about moving elsewhere. She explained that her link to the place to which she had migrated was, firstly, her husband, and secondly her family. However, without her husband and daughter, she had lost the reasons to be in Newcastle and she felt no sense of belonging to it. Romina can be considered an older migrant whom King *et al.* (2017) would place in the category of being 'left behind by migration', referring to the parents of those young people who migrated elsewhere. And yet, the previous literature in this regard considers these people as 'not older migrants as such', and so Romina differs from these people in experiencing ageing in the context of migration. On this basis, Romina may be an example of 'older migrants who are left behind' but still remains in the shadows within social gerontology at the intersection of migration.

More importantly, these data are relevant in identifying the factors that intersect with the choice of ageing in place, returning home, or moving elsewhere in later life, as illustrated in Chapter 1. Therefore, this might contribute to improving understanding of the alternatives that retirement migrants are bound to entails as they age in foreign countries, a prominent theme in studies of ageing at the intersection with migration, (Razum *et al.*, 2005; Bolzman *et al.*, 2006; Ganga, 2006; Klinthäll, 2006; Rodríguez and Egea, 2006; Barrett and Mosca, 2013; Baykara-Krumme, 2013; Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015; Zontini, 2015; Torres and Karl, 2016) As Romina's example has shown, her doubts about the best place in which to grow older came to the fore in reference to everyday life tensions and her lack of a social network. Experiencing loneliness and frustration, in addition to her lack of motivation for being in the host country, accentuated her sense of belonging to an Italian identity. She was thinking

of ageing elsewhere, and had identified her original home town as the place where she belonged. However, the fact of no longer having Italian citizenship affected her sense of well-being as she was unable to choose whether to move from one place to another. Thus, the possibility of being mobile in later life can be limited by the political frameworks in place at the time of original migration. Whether or not the formal practice of identification (citizenship) is an actual limitation on ageing migrants' mobility, it was still perceived as such from a participant's perspective, as the case of Romina showed. This example highlights, firstly, how barriers to identification with places inhabited after migration can be due to a lack of social ties, as these are shaped by the presence or absence of significant others; secondly, barriers to identification can also arise from the impact of the politics of migration on the sense of self and how it changes over time at different life stages. As in the example of Teresa above, Romina, in envisioning her end of life, reconsidered her attachment to the country of provenance. However, in contrast to Teresa, in Romina's case the lack of social bonds to the places of migration was a driving force behind her potential relocation. Nonetheless, more than individual choice, the limit to mobility between countries is the interpretation of the politics of migration, according to an ageing migrant's point of view.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

I have addressed in this chapter how a sense of identity is articulated by introducing a range of contrasting examples of older people from different Italian migrant generations. By highlighting the heterogeneity of this group of people, the reported data challenges some of the stereotypical assumptions in social gerontology according to which 'all elderly immigrants are the same' (Torres, 2006, p. 1352). The heterogeneity of the participants I worked is made visible by the meanings they associated with the places they inhabited, which helped to define older age at the intersection with migration.

This chapter has shown how the articulation of identity is socially constructed in interaction between people, shaped by several factors interdependent of each other. While some older people had established a 'sense of home' in the context of migration, others felt they did not entirely belong to the context in which they were growing old, given informal and formal practices of identity.

I have illustrated how those who felt at home in the context of migration (Lucia, Carolina, and Miranda) attributed this to a feeling of social embeddedness, given their social ties. Thus, family ties in the context of migration and the sense of belonging to social groups outside the family context (communities, neighbourhood) were facilitators of a sense of attachment to places. In contrast, where these were lacking, older Italians had no 'sense of home' in the context of migration, due to the fact that their perceived identities were product of interaction within the social context in which they were growing older (such as in the examples of Filomena and Romina). Therefore, the lack of engagement in the social sphere outside of family bonds, might shape the sense of not belonging to the context of migration. Hence, some of the participants interviewed showed how they adopted a bifocal attitude (Vertovec, 2007) -such as the comparison between 'home' and 'abroad'-

Therefore, these examples have drawn attention to the extent to which a sense of identification with places inhabited is a condition for 'ageing-in-place' in the context of migration (such as the examples of Romina and Sir John). These examples have shown how the definition of the places in which to grow older in a positive way is determined by how the experience of migration has altered the conceptualization of ageing. Thus, those who experienced a positive sense of well-being in ageing in place revealed how they had shaped identities based on the presumed characteristics of the place or everyday life practices embedded in them (Maria, Sir John).

In addition, Sir John and Domenico's cases represent those whose sense of difference has been created by the politics of migration which shaped the past or present, and their sense of identification with places. Sir John strongly identified with the context of migration, but this was his subjective perspective and not one acknowledged by formal citizenship. To reinforce this, Domenico had never lost his Italian identity, and felt an outsider in the nation ('I feel an immigrant here') due to his experiences in the early stages of migration, to which he had never grown accustomed, as our encounter brought to light. These participants, perceiving themselves to be 'othered' throughout their lives (Mario and Domenico) or only in older age (Filomena) experienced a sense of discomfort in the idea of being buried in a place to which they felt no sense of belonging (Romina). This is consequently related to the desire of ageing elsewhere.

- Thus, from this, three points may be derived. First, older migrants sense of identity to places is built throughout one's life in the interplay between social and formal practices of identity. Secondly, these findings are significant from a social gerontology perspective, as they show how a perceived difference is the basis for a sense of double jeopardy. Finally, the negotiation of belonging shapes the idea of ageing. Therefore, the articulation of ethnic identity in later life from an ageing migrant point of view is worthy of research as it provides a better understanding of the idea of ageing from an older migrant's point of view. I might argue that the diversity within the group of older migrants interviewed is characterized by the relationship they had established with places: whilst a low attachment to the place inhabited causes discomfort generated by the expectation of ageing differently or desire to age elsewhere, a high level of attachment shapes identity and the notion of ageing in a positive manner. Therefore, attachment to places and sense of identification with them are an important condition to determine the experience of ageing, either in the context of migration or elsewhere. Drawing on the findings illustrated in this chapter, the facilitators to place identity that contribute to a 'sense of home' in later life for an Italian migrants perspective are: family bonds, social relationship, sense of community or neighbourhood bonds and the role in a political sphere (citizenship, right to vote). These aspects are summarised in the following figure (Figure 5).

#### Sense of home: Place Identity

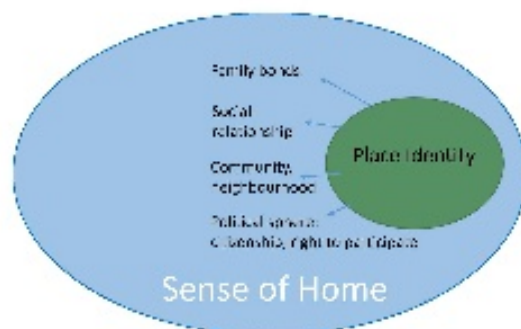


Figure 5 *Focus on Place Identity and aspects that contribute to a 'sense of home'.*

I touch upon these aspects in the following chapters to show how place identity shapes a sense of attachment to places. Based on the concept of transnationality, introduced in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and 6 explore the construction of home, in more

details, focusing on the Italian place attachment first, and then the UK place attachment. In particular, in Chapter 5, I show how different degrees of attachment to places in Italy relate to ideas and experiences of transnationality.

## Chapter 5. Transnationality and home making practices

### 5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, I explored how a sense of identity was articulated by some of the older Italian migrants interviewed for this research, and I drew attention to a dual sense of identity that shapes attachment to both the country of residence and the one of migration. From this articulation of identity, emerged the dilemma participants' experienced from feeling at 'home', 'abroad', or a mix of both. In this chapter, I aim to unpack this complexity around the concept of place attachment, focusing on the sense of attachment to the country of provenience, Italy (see Figure 6 below). This chapter looks at how the attachment to Italy and how the Italian aspects of the identity and sense of home are maintained/created/performed.

Sense of home: Place Attachment



Figure 6 Focus on Place Attachment *to the country of provenience (Italy)*:

Place attachment will be explored, firstly, by introducing the circular lifestyle that characterises some of the participants in this study. This theme will be based on the concept of transnationalism as highlighted by the gerontological literature at the intersection with migration, illustrated in Chapter 2 (Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015). Transnationality refers to the condition by which some older migrants, also defined as 'transnational migrants', possess a continuum of contacts across nations, building social fields both in the country of origin and the country of settlement (Schiller *et al.*, 1992; Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015). Data highlight the experiences of ageing across countries, showing how Italian older adults' mobility depends on physical aspects of the environment and opportunities for social interactions.



Secondly, I consider how place attachment manifested through everyday practices to re-create 'a feeling of home' in the adopted country. By this, I refer to strategies through which participants shaped the home environment into a context that, as much as possible, resembles with the place left pre-migration. This thematic pillar draws on material culture studies which focuses on how material objects, their layout, organization in personal spaces, and embodied practices within the home, play an important role in the definition of sense of self for the homeowners (Miller, 1987; Steiner, 2001; Tilley, 2006; Miller, 2008b), as illustrated in Chapter 2. This focus was prompted by theorization on the relationship that migrant populations have with 'things' (Tolia-Kelly, 2004; Walsh, 2006; Basu and Coleman, 2008; Vilar Rosales, 2009; Giorgi and Fasulo, 2013; Walsh and Näre, 2016), that guides the theoretical and methodological framework of this chapter. The data illustrate the construction of meanings associated with private dwellings in a migrant population. Similarly, within the social gerontological literature there is general agreement that the meaning of home is a central aspect of personal biography in later life, and that it contributes particularly to older adults' sense of continuity and identity (Rowles, 1978; Csikszentmihalyi and Halton, 1981; Rowles, 1983; Sixsmith, 1986; Gilroy, 2005; Peace *et al.*, 2005b; Sherman and Dacher, 2005; Sixsmith *et al.*, 2014). In line with this literature, I highlight the importance of the domestic sphere in the process of belonging and the expression of a cultural identity amongst the older Italian migrants I worked with.

Data extracted from 11 participants will be presented in this chapter. Amongst these, four are third generation Italians, whilst all the others are ageing migrants. Six of these are female and five male. Four of these 11 have been introduced in Chapter 4. I selected these participants as during the data analyses, the themes of transnationality and consequentially attachment to Italy emerged as significant for these people.

The main argument put forward in this chapter is that transnationality and home-making strategies shape a sense of attachment and identity to places in a complex manner in later life. The diversity within the group of older Italian migrants in Newcastle, shows how both mobility through places and attachment to them should not be seen as opposite and mutually exclusive phenomena. On the contrary, the juxtaposition between the two contrasting practices offers valuable insight into understanding identity and belonging from an older migrant perspective.

## 5.2 Transnationality

### 5.2.1 Attachment to grand-parents' villages

As discussed in Chapter 4, Alfredo, introduced in section 4.2.1, feels socially accepted by people living in the district of his Italian village, despite describing himself as not 'fully Italian'. During the interview, our conversation shifted from his sense of identity to his attachment to places. He showed me a map of his Italian village on the wall (see Figure 8, in the final section of Chapter 5) discussed his movements across the two nations as follows:

'A: Well, like my grandfather, I am a seasonal migrant. I'm used to spending at least 4 months during the summer in Italy. [...] I bought my grand-parents' home in the village, [in Italy] when I was 30 years old, like you. That house is part of me, if it were to break or something, part of me would die. Recently, I also bought another home nearby and I go during Christmas time. [...] I can't live there during the winter, there is no public transport and nothing works properly, really [...] Italy is a place for spiritual refreshment. [...] Here, in England, I like to have an ordinary life, I have my colleagues, but, I feel here I don't have a sense of community, I know only my neighbors' door numbers. When I'm in Italy, I can enter in people's homes and say: 'what are we eating today?' I love Italian lifestyle. People wait for me, and always ask 'when are you coming back? So I mean, this shows you the attachment to my village.

S: yeah, to your village, because you have this map on the wall, as soon as you enter home.'

(Alfredo, July 2015)

Alfredo revealed that he used to live in different places at different times of the year, according to his needs. This example is in line with studies on places-ties in the literature about post-retirement migration, as detailed in Chapter 2. In particular, Gustafson (2001b) highlighted how attachment to places shapes conceptualization of ageing. Hence, Alfredo's expression of his sense of attachment to places contributes to frame the expectations in older age. This emerges in relation to the characteristics of places: Italy is a place for 'spiritual refreshment' and UK for 'ordinary life'. Therefore, the dual sense of attachment and movement across countries can be explained in terms of advantages in the physical and the social aspects of the

environment: whilst the Alfredo's ordinary life is constituted of amenities and services that he can access (public transport, and generally efficiency of the UK life), the periods of 'spiritual refreshment' are provided by the Italian context. Therefore, by defining himself as a 'seasonal migrant', Alfredo's example evokes the research trend in social gerontology that has defined post-retirement group of people as 'snowbirds' (McHugh, 1996) in the United States or 'retirees' in the European context (Huber and Reilly, 2004). As reported in Chapter 2, these groups of older retirees have been defined as having a circular lifestyles, moving between different dwellings according to their needs (Gustafson, 2001b). In line with these contributions, this example also illustrates the importance of emplacement: effects of places and environment on health outcomes (Gustafson, 2001b, p. 391;392). Thus, a circular lifestyle enhances Alfredo's well-being.

In addition, his dual belonging has been identified as one of the main factors that determine movements across nations. The reason for Alfredo's sense of dual belonging lies in the fact that he felt accepted and welcomed by his Italian neighbours and acquaintances ('they wait for me, I can enter people's homes'). Alfredo's identity has been influenced by the mobility across countries, and his sense of attachment to his grandparents' home-town is due to the bond with the Italian community in the village. This contributed to cultivating opportunities for enhancing social ties and strengthens his sense of belonging to an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991), a theme introduced in Chapter 4. Thus, Alfredo highlighted how he lacked a sense of community in Newcastle and, therefore, these tantalising social aspects of environment encouraged him to travel across countries in different periods of the year, adopting a 'transnational' lifestyle (Levitt, 2001). As illustrated in Chapter 2, some of these people remain active in their place of origin, while also being incorporated into the receiving society (Torres, 2013). As such, in the example of Alfredo, maintenance of contacts with people who inhabit those places might play a role in the tendency to move house and relocate for some period of time during the year.

Furthermore, Alfredo's affective bonds with Italy might be interpreted as culturally embedded in his family setting, as he made explicit reference to his grandfather's maintenance of transnational ties with Italy: ('Well, like my grandfather, I am a seasonal migrant.'). This is similar to the interpretation of movements across countries provided by the example of Teresa, in Chapter 4.

Finally, manifesting his high attachment to the home in Italy, he asserted the importance of the dwelling for his identity in later life: ('That house is part of me, if it were to break, part of me would die'). To express his attachment to the village in Italy, he pointed to an object of affection in his domestic environment. The map he showed me represents Tuscany Gran Duke's Region before the Unification of Italy, and the village where Alfredo's family came from. Therefore, in line with the research of previous scholars illustrated in Chapter 2 (Tolia-Kelly, 2004; Walsh, 2006; Savaş, 2014; Walsh, 2016a), this example shows how material possessions sustain identification with the culture and places.

Amongst my participants, Christine also provides an example of the negotiation of belonging that influences attachment to places. Christine is a 63 years old woman, who was born in Jarrow and has lived there ever since. Her grandparents, Salvatore and Marta, migrated from Lazio Region, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. They settled in Jarrow, near Newcastle, where the family ran an ice-cream factory and several ice-cream shops, and where Christine grew up. During our interview, Christine said that she likes to spend some time in Italy, ranging from weeks to months during the summer:

'C: My house is here in the UK. But in August, I have to visit my grandma's village. Every year we go to Arpino, for the ferragosto, the middle of August. We don't have to, but we feel better when we are there. They have a competition with the neighborhood, every year. They wear traditional dresses. And it's really just lots of traditional music, food, and dancing. They play these instruments. I have got here this fisarmonica<sup>43</sup>, made in Arpino. Here, there is the name of the artisan who made it. My uncle Reuben used to play it in the family ice-cream shop, when I was a child.

S: What does it mean for you?

P: Well, that's a link with our culture. We just, we don't get dressed up or anything. But, we just go there every year now. And, we were supporting our team.

S: Yeah. Do you feel attached to that community somehow?

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<sup>43</sup> 'Fisarmonica' is accordion in English (see Figure 9 in the final section of Chapter 5)

C: Yes, I do.

S: Yeah? Even if you were born here?

C: Just because. Well, me mam used to talk about Italy from when I was a toddler.'

(Christine, February, 2016)

Christine revealed that the annual folklore celebration in August, held in her grandparent's village in Italy, is her main reason for travelling across countries in later life. Participating in this festivity means experiencing what, for her, is the 'traditional' Italian way of being ('having good food, participating in the neighbourhood competitions, and dancing in the streets since late during the night'). Therefore, her annual visit to her family's home village, is an opportunity to cultivate her family roots and enact her Italian cultural belonging. This example might be associated with the concept of 'root tourism' as explained by Basu (2004). With this expression, the scholar refers to the North American tourists who travel to their ancestors' villages in Scotland to discover their own belonging. As a consequence of this experience, the participants of the study felt they have discovered a place to which they strongly identify with. This sense of identification is also shown by Christine, who affirmed a perceived sense of shared heritage ('That's a link with our culture'). Moreover, the sense of belonging participants felt to the Italian community that participate in the folklore celebration ('we have got our team'), is reaffirmed through our research encounter, even when I have questioned this ('do you feel attached to that community, even if you were born here?').

In addition to Alfredo's example, Christine also revealed what she perceived as sense of well-being experienced in these places: ('Italy is a place for spiritual refreshment' in Alfredo's case and 'I feel better when I'm there' in Christine's example). In both cases, the social aspects of the environment are considered as a driving force generating a sense of attachment to places. Likewise, both Alfredo and Christine – third generation Italians – made explicit references to their families' sense of attachment to places expressed in their practices ('my grandfather was a seasonal migrant' in Alfredo's interview) and biographies ('my uncle Reuben used to play the accordion in our family ice-cream shop' in Christine's example). In this respect, Alfredo and Christine, are similar to other participants introduced in Chapter 4 (Teresa, Lucia, Carolina, and Miranda) who identified Newcastle as their stable

home. However, they expressed the importance of mobility across countries given their sense of attachment to their grandparents' village. Thus, these people renew their presence in their Italians' home town, reinforcing a sense of community across countries by adopting a transnational lifestyle.

Furthermore, the participants in these two examples explained the attachment to their family village by directing my attention to objects cherished and displayed. During my data collection with other participants, most of the conversations about attachment to Italy or a specific village, were prompted by objects: as in the examples discussed above, these were visual representations of places (geographical maps in the case of Alfredo) and cultural heritage (the accordion for Christine). Christine's accordion belongs to that category of objects carried by migrants during their journeys, back and forth, from their country of origin to their adoptive one. Several scholars have defined these objects as providing a symbolic sense of home in the first stage of migration, through which perform familiar acts (Parkin, 1999; Morley, 2000). Hence, the accordion can be identified as a transitional object (Parkin, 1999) in which to inscribe personal biographies in migration. Christine revealed to me that the accordion was carried from Italy to the UK by her uncle, representing an object transported across countries by a migrant (Morley, 2000; Kaiser, 2008). However, for Christine, the same accordion can be seen as a curiosity from another part of the world, that is out of the ordinary – an object from a distant society (Buchli, 2002) that has acquired prestige as a symbol of heritage and tradition<sup>44</sup>. As such, for Christine, the object displayed in her private dwelling represents her attachment and rootedness. In fact, the accordion is imbued with meanings associated with cultural belonging and expression of identity (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton, 1981; Sherman and Dacher, 2005). Thus, a sense of attachment to places is materialized by a tangible instrument that, linking the past to the present, supports memories and honours connections with significant others.

Moreover, according to Tuan (1991), story-telling plays a role in sustaining migrants' identities and memory, through providing a sense of continuity in the process of migration, which also is drawn on by the next generations. As such, from these two

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<sup>44</sup> Following Pomian's Pomian, K. (1990) 'Le déterminisme: histoire d'une problématique.' *La querelle du déterminisme*. Paris: Galimard.: words, these objects can be defined as semiophore objects that no longer have a practical use Buchli, V. (2002) *The material culture reader*. Oxford: Berg. They can be seen as belonging to the cabinet of curiosities, ancestor of our museums, which remains one of the first concerns of material culture studies *ibid*.

examples, I illustrated that some home possessions are collected and play a role in building up familial longevity and respectability, that further generations of migrants can draw on to generate a sense of who they are in the present (Miller, 2008b). In fact, material culture was used by Alfredo and Christine to sustain their sense of cultural identity and belonging to places. These objects represent participants' affective bonds with Italy and are clearly part of an individual effort to reconstruct the past (highlighting family of origin, tradition and heritage) giving a sense of continuity to their personal stories before the migration process. Hence, Christine's accordion is placed next to a poster featuring the folklore festivity she was explaining to me. I interpreted this domestic layout as a way to symbolically represent her attachment to places (see Figure 10 in the final section of Chapter 5). However, I argue that these objects can even symbolize the relationship with places in the future of life, from the perspective of ageing migrants, as I address in the next section.

### *5.2.2 Enjoying the mobility in retirement*

Material possessions show attachment to places and shed lights on idea of ageing from the perspective of ageing migrants. An example of this is provided by Manuel, who is a 75 years old gentleman from Lazio Region. Manuel moved to Newcastle in the 1960's where he set up and worked in his hair dresser saloon. He retired during the course of my fieldwork. Manuel, during the course of the interview, expressed his attachment to the physical aspects of the house, through a portrait that represents the house in Italy where he was born and grew up (see Figure 11 in the final section of Chapter 5). During the time of data collection, Manuel and his wife Martina planned to spend four months in Italy, following Martina's shoulder surgery. Manuel encouraged Martina by saying:

'M: We go to Italy, in 4 weeks. We will have some lovely walks on the seaside, early in the morning. She will breathe the iodine, and she will recover soon, you will see. See will be rejuvenated when back! E l'Italia, the air of Italy fa miracoli<sup>45</sup>! You know, the good weather, the seaside, the sun could facilitate the bones' recovery. This is the house where we will go in Italy. Can you see how beautiful it is from this painting here? It was given to my grandfather by Benito Mussolini, as he fought for the First Word War. I worked the all life to build this house in Italy, renovating my

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45 'che fa miracoli' in English is: has the potential to do miracles

family farm. Now that I'm a pensioner, the two of us can enjoy this house, at least for few months in the summer.'

(Manuel, October, Translated into English, 2016)

Manuel's example illuminates the importance of the physical aspects of places and the belief that moving location for some time during the year, can have positive effects on health outcomes. This relates to the advantage of the environment (air, food, sun, water) on health. This physical aspect of the environment determines possibilities of being involved in different outdoors activities compared to the UK, as they appreciate being exposed to the sun and having walks outdoors in a warmer weather. Similar to Alfredo and Christine, Manuel's example also explains the reason for moving across nations in terms of the benefits this has for personal lifestyles. In fact, the three examples presented so far illustrate how the attachment to Italy is due, firstly, to anticipation of the happiness experienced in these places (Alfredo: 'spiritual refreshment'; Christine: 'lots of traditional music, food, and dancing'; Manuel: 'lovely walks on the seaside early in the morning'); and secondly, to the definition of ageing as a stage of life conducive to re-establishing connections with places.

To further elaborate on this last point, I wish to emphasize that the conversation about Manuel's house in Italy was prompted by a visual representation of his own dwelling. In this example, Manuel highlighted his attachment to his home in Italy through a portrait that refers to his family's national pride. He stated that in this house, this object has a value as it symbolizes an award given to his grandfather in the past<sup>46</sup>; but he also highlighted that throughout his working life he invested in building a dwelling in Italy. This is what makes his example similar to that of Alfredo ('I bought this house when I was 30 y.o like you'), as these houses are clearly part of an individual effort to maintain relationships with places in later life. Thus, on first consideration, these objects provided older Italian migrants with a sense of continuity with the past; however, this example adds to the previous discussion that cherished objects offer insight into the conceptualization of ageing from an older migrants' perspective. This appears to intersect with places. As such, in the case of Manuel,

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<sup>46</sup> This painting reveals a narrative about the male family member and the character of Mussolini, providing an insight into the kind of history that these participants represent. It might reveal participants' cultural values, political orientations as expressions of the type of historical narrative that the participant favours. However, this is not an immediate concern of this dissertation.



the notion of ageing is defined as a stage of life in which to enjoy free time and re-establish connections with places of provenience.

A further example of this interpretation of later life is provided by Riccardo and Diana, who are a retired couple in their 70s' and who come from a region in South Central Italy. Riccardo moved to the UK after the Second World War, and he worked for most of his life as ice-cream seller. In their everyday life in Newcastle, Riccardo used to play an active role in the neighbourhood where they live and different social groups. His wife is also committed to helping in their neighbourhood church. During the interview, Riccardo showed me a portrait of the waterfall (Figure 12 in the final section of Chapter 5) in his Italian village and stated:

'R: I would be a stranger if go back for good in my home town in Italy. So, in the winter, I live here and that's my house, my children live here, my grandchildren too, we help them if they need us. However, my wife and myself, during the summer, we usually go away from here. [...] We spend almost few months between Italy and Spain. In Spain we live in a resort with other older people like us. We both relax, I can play golf. We have the swimming pool in front of the house. [...] Afterwards, we use to stay one or two months in Italy. I build this house, next to the waterfall. It took me all life. [...] Italy is meaningful for our village, where we can meet our relatives and friends. We go out to be involved in all the activities of the village, we use to go out and dance every night. Yes, because in Italy in the summer there is a social event every night, outdoor. [...] That's our life. We are retired, but enjoying life much more than before.'

(Riccardo, Translated into English, October 2016)

Riccardo constitutes an example of a post-retirement migrant who enjoys mobility across countries and a transnational lifestyle. Considering the possibility of relocating 'for good' to Italy in later life, he asserts that he would feel like a stranger if he relocated to his home-country. This illustrates how the social aspects of the environment play a significant role in generating the 'feeling of home', and that this influences the decision to return back to the country of origin after retiring, as illustrated in Chapter 1. As explained in Chapter 2, older migrants adopt a transnational lifestyle, by maintaining contacts with different contexts, having more than one house – in the country of origin and in the one of residence – speaking two

languages, and building different 'social fields' (Torres, 2013). According to the literature on social gerontology, as an effect of the globalization of international migration (Phillipson, 2007; Torres and Karl, 2016; King *et al.*, 2017), transnationalism enables ageing migrants moving across nations to achieve a positive experience of ageing, stressing the effects of places on health and wellbeing in later life. In fact, Riccardo, as with Manuel who was previously discussed, conceptualizes older age as a positive stage of his life for the possibility of being mobile (being similarly attached to Italy and Spain) and adopting a transnational lifestyle.

In this respect, the examples of Manuel and Riccardo are representative of the majority of the first generation of Italian migrants who took part in my research, that often travel from the UK to Italy for different periods of the year. These people have a stable residence in the UK, where they reside all year long, and a home in Italy, to enjoy shorter or longer sojourns. In most of the case, the dream of relocation was already part of their migration plan. However, in later life, these people benefit by their mobility within the UK, in Europe<sup>47</sup> and beyond, due to multiple residential affiliations. The length of sojourns from Newcastle varies and ranges between a few weeks and a few months; however, the majority of these stated that they enjoy going to Italy in spring and early autumn (April-September), as it is generally warmer compared with the UK. Moving elsewhere during a time in the year seems to be related to the possibility of travelling – in terms of health and well-being, economic resources, having a house, or a connection with family members. This group of people revealed a high sense of attachment to both their country of residence in the UK and their home-town pre-migration (and elsewhere).

As showed by these two examples, the notion of home and belonging became important in the interpretation of ageing after retirement age – as highlighted by scholars in social gerontology (Ganga, 2006; Torres and Karl, 2016). In particular, in Manuel and Riccardo's case, the life investment of building a dwelling in the villages where they came from prior to migration, came to an end in later life. Having acquired a pension, they both envisioned they would spend it while ageing – on sojourns – in the country of provenience. This has also been confirmed by other participants who took part in my research, who used to move across countries for different periods of

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<sup>47</sup> Generally these people spend the warmer months of the year (April-September) in different locations: partially in Italy, and partially somewhere else, such as Spain, Greece, and Cyprus, Florida.

the year at the time of the interviews. Therefore, the majority of older migrants interviewed described older age in positive terms, by comparing the opportunity to experience a transnational lifestyle, cultivating social relationship and relaxing in later life, to the lack of this possibility during their 'working life'. I will expand on this point in Chapter 6.

In summarizing this section, the cases presented so far are important for three main conceptual reasons. Firstly, the conversations about attachment to Italy and were initiated by material culture. Therefore, the intersection between material culture studies and social gerontology have shed lights on ageing migrants' emotional attachment to places. Secondly, visual and material culture that displays attachment to the country of origin led to an emergent theme around the relationship with homeland, from the perspective of migrants. The relationship with the homeland amongst ageing migrants has been of major concern in the context of migration (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016). These participants manifested the will to re-establish connections with places of provenience in later life. Nonetheless, they clearly stated that they consider 'home' the context of migration, and Italy is viewed as a place to relax – similar to the participants in Chapter 4-. These data are in line with the cyclic nature of migrants' return visits to their places of origin, as described by Ganga (2006). However, exploring Italian migrants in Nottingham, Ganga addressed the potential desire to relocate to the places of origin amongst older Italian migrants (first generation). As illustrated in Chapter 1, the 'myth of return' is popular amongst Italian migrants (Gabaccia, 2000; Fortier, 2006; Baldassar, 2007; Wessendorf, 2007; Zontini, 2015). In contrast with this literature, the participants' examples reported here did not consider relocating permanently to their country of origin, at the time of the interview. Despite so, they assert the importance of mobility in their later life. Hence, thirdly and lastly, these data show how attachment to places determine the interpretation of ageing from an older migrant perspective. Having identified their 'home' in the context of migration, my findings confirmed that for this group of people it remains important to cultivate rapport and relationships through transnational ties during their older age.

However, all the data shown above refers to the idea of ageing and subjective experiences of places, from the perspective of ageing migrants who are 'mobile', i.e., adopting a transnational lifestyle. It must be borne in mind that, as Torres (2013) states, not all older migrants have a transnational lifestyle. In the next section, I

elaborate on the sense of attachment to places of pre-migration from the perspective of those who are less mobile.

### **5.3 Lack of Mobility and Place Identity**

So far, I have established that the articulation of a dual sense of identity might shape transnationality or the maintenance of transnational ties. However, the sense of attachment to the country of origin is not only related to the degree of people's mobility. To support this argument, I explore the sense of attachment and identification with places from the perspective of those who are less mobile. For example, Domenico, a participant introduced in Chapter 4, revealed that he identify himself as Italian, and that he did not feel to belong to the context of migration. However, Domenico does not define himself as a 'seasonal migrant' like Alfredo, nor spend short sojourns in his home-town like Christine, Manuel and Riccardo. Domenico said:

'I don't have anything in Italy. Not a house, nor any longer relatives. All people of my generation passed away. Nothing has been left. It has been many years now that we don't go to Italy. But, of course, you do not lose your identity.'

(Domenico, Translated into English, March 2016)

In this extract, Domenico refers to the difference between attachment to places and identification to them. A lack of attachment to the place pre-migration is justified in terms of both material possessions and social connections. This conditioned for Domenico the possibility of being mobile, such as traveling back and forth between different countries, as the participants in the previous sections do. This last point became significant in the course of the data collection, as many of the other ageing migrants with whom I worked were not able to adopt a transnational lifestyle.

There seem to be many reasons why people may lack mobility across countries. In the majority of these cases, this was the perception around the accessibility of places. In particular, the physical constraints of ageing seem to be the most significant reasons for not adopting a transnational lifestyle. For instance, for Carolina, a participant introduced in Chapter 4, her sense of 'home' was in Britain, and she identified much more with British, rather than Italian culture. During an informal conversation in the Bingo hall, she told me:

‘C: I would love to go to Italy, of course I would love to travel. But, when I think that I have to do all these travels by plane. I have to arrive in London, or Manchester to take a flight, and I can’t. I can’t travel any longer. I don’t have energy to take the train from here, then take the flight from there. And I am alone. Before, when I was younger I did it. With my husband, I travel back and forth many times, now I can’t so, [...] I made my Italy in here.’

(Extract from fieldwork diary, Carolina, December 2015)

For Carolina the accessibility of transport is an obstacle to her mobility. She describes herself as no longer being mobile, compared with her lifestyle in younger age. Moreover, being an older widow she viewed traveling as being more difficult compared to when her husband was with her. Similar to Carolina and Domenico, many of the other older Italians who participated in my research explained a lack of mobility in later life, as due to difficulties in terms of resources and possibilities: such as economic, time, health, physical constraints of ageing, or other commitments (i.e., many considered themselves linked to places because they needed to care for their grand-children, as shown by Teresa in Chapter 4). Many more were worried about no longer having the possibility to travel.

From the two examples discussed above, I wish to emphasize that place attachment and place identity are not influenced in all cases by the mobility of older people after retirement age. In other words, it is not the level of mobility that shapes how people identify with the places of origin. In fact, Domenico is not an older migrant who adopts a transnational lifestyle; nevertheless, his sense of identification with the places he inhabited pre-migration is very high. In contrast, Carolina who expressed a high sense of attachment to and identification with Britain, rather than Italy, cannot travel any longer because of what she perceives as the constraints of ageing. Nevertheless, for her the context of migration sustains processes of cultural identification. Therefore, these two contrasting examples may lead to consider the reality as more nuanced and multifaceted as described in the previous section.

From these examples emerge a significant insight for this research: to explore place attachment and identification with places, it should not be taken for granted that these are related to the degree of mobility or transnationality. In fact, some of the other participants in this study, regardless of how frequently they travelled between

countries or maintained social ties, expressed their attachment to Italy in different ways. In this respect, it is worthy to dwell on the concept of transnational 'ways of being' and ways of belonging' as defined by Schiller (2004). The scholar illustrates how 'transnational way of being' refer to all quotidian acts and everyday practices that shapes the life across borders (as the four example in the previous section have illustrated). She also define with the term 'transnational way of belonging' the identity of people who reach out distant places whether or not they live within transnational social fields. This generally take place through memory, nostalgia and imagination (Schiller, 2004, p. 458). Such as the example of Carolina, who expressed her sense of attachment to the place she migrated from, by saying that she recreated her Italy in the UK. To support his viewpoint, in the following section, I provide further examples of ageing Italians who kept their home ties without being mobile. To do so, I look more closely at the role of material culture within the private domestic sphere in the context of migration, as manifesting place attachment and sustaining processes of cultural identification.

#### **5.4 Creating Transnational Borders Indoor**

During my fieldwork, it soon became apparent that a sense of attachment to Italy is manifested through everyday practices and strategies to re-create Italy in the adopted country, as seen in the example of Lucia. Lucia is a participant introduced in Chapter 4, and at the time of the interview, was a widow of almost twenty years and lived by herself, in the same house she had bought with her husband. I report here an extract from my fieldwork diary detailing a meeting with her:

'The first time I visited Lucia for a Sunday lunch, she opened the door and her son M. was there to welcome me. Aware of the English behavioral rules, I asked if I should leave my shoes at the entrance. Lucia said: "No, (laughing) no way! Since you passed the door step, in my house, we are not in England anymore! That's an Italian house!" I was really surprised.

To help my understanding, Mario commented: "That's what my father also used to tell me!" Lucia: "Oh! Yes! My husband cared a lot about it. 'As soon as you walked the doorstep you are in Italy', he used to say. When they were kids, [referring to Mario, and his brother] they were at the school during the morning. So they used to spend time with their English friends, and when they came back at home, how you can blame them, they used

to speak in English! But their father, oh my God their father! 'No!' He used to say "When you are in this house you have to speak Italian! (Laughing)".

Mario added: "He didn't reply to us if we were speaking English! So we should remember that before coming home, before walking through the doorstep, we should speak Italian at home!" Lucia said: "You know how strict the Italian fathers were at the time?"

(Field-notes diary, Lucia, July 2015)

This extract from my fieldnotes raises several interesting points. Firstly, it illustrates how Lucia constructed imaginary boundaries between the two nations in an arbitrary manner, through practices of everyday life. Hence, the threshold achieves significance in the practice of switching languages between indoors and outdoors: identifying it as a transnational border between the two national contexts. In this sense, the threshold can be seen as a 'transnational way of being', according to Schiller (2004) conception of it, illustrated above. Moreover, this example emphasizes the meaning of home in the expression of cultural identity and the construction of belonging embedded in places. Hence, I interpret Lucia's use of the domestic sphere as 'transnational ways of belonging', around the imaginary boundaries between public and private spheres.

In this family context, Lucia's husband affirmed, almost 60 years ago, his sense of belonging to an Italian culture – *mise-en-scene* by the Italian language – symbolized by the home<sup>48</sup> in England. Switching languages into Italian before entering the home was an 'everyday must'. In this case, the home is a private place which demarks both a transnational ways of being and belonging. As such, the Italian identity was re-affirmed on a daily basis. These converge with previous examples - such as the case of Teresa in Chapter 4, Alfredo and Christine in Chapter 5 - in expressing how the family context amongst Italian migrants (first or third generations), played a role in creating and reinforcing affective bonds to places inhabited prior to migration.

It is interesting to note, in the example reported above, that while the Lucia's husband passed away 22 years before the interview took place, his will is still respected and passed on – at least to new Italian guests in the house, as I had

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<sup>48</sup> I am aware that this example emphasizes the role of language, as conveyor of cultural belonging as an expressive site for transmission of cultural heritage. It offers insights on how cultural belonging is produced and inscribed within the confines of the family, within the domestic sphere. However, this is not my immediate concern in this thesis.

witness. Therefore, the domestic sphere became a setting through which to narrate past experiences, and reaffirm cultural belonging also in later life, amongst some participants in this study. Hence, the attachment to places left pre-migration and identification to these was manifested through transnational ways of being and belonging, by the materiality of the house in the context of migration.

On a methodological note, as mentioned in Chapter 3, this example reveals the strength of ethnography in exploring the meaning of places: just walking through the door of my participants' house, enabled me to capture 'everyday' cultural contexts, that wouldn't have been observed otherwise. My attempt to follow the 'host country's internal rules', through leaving my shoes at the entrance – not a common practice in Italy – inspired my interlocutors to explicit the unwritten rules of their place. Therefore, this example shows how some data was generated by participants outside of any 'structured questions'. Moreover, this example relates to the participants interpretation of the role of the researcher as an 'insider', as articulated by Ganga and Scott (2006). Ethnographically, a common cultural background has been acknowledged by the participants ('we are Italian, as you are') and revealed by the intention of creating common ground with me about what she perceived to be a shared knowledge ('you know how strict Italian fathers were'), assuming that I correctly interpreted what she was talking about. Nonetheless, the generational difference between us, raised awareness of the history we represented, rather than what I immediately experienced. This point might also be extended to objects shown to me during the research encounters – my participants assumed that I could spot the 'Italianness' in their homes. However, this was not always the case, given local nuances and generational differences. In fact, after this experience during the first stage of my fieldwork, I reflected on the need to think more clearly about what enables a house to be described as an 'Italian home'. I touch on the role of domestic objects in older migrants' homes in the next section.

#### *5.4.1 Recreating Italy in the UK: furnishing and decorating to display belonging and attachment to places*

Looking at the ways in which older Italian migrants interpret place attachment, I next illustrate the practices of furnishing and decorating private dwellings to resemble, as much as possible, the places or origin. To address the above, I begin by exploring the case of Tina, who is a first generation migrant. Tina is in her 70's and comes from Lazio Region. Tina married a second generation Italian, and therefore, like Romina



and Maria in the examples reported in Chapter 4, had to renounce her Italian citizenship after marriage. Tina had been a widow for several years when I met her during my participant observation in the Bingo Club, and interviewed her twice during my fieldwork at her house. Here, I report an extract from my fieldnotes diary, based on the first time I was welcomed into her house:

‘On entering Tina’s house, I encountered a plethora of interior design details that evoked the ‘Italianness’. I recognized Italian encyclopedias or classic novels (Pinocchio, Divina Commedia, Enciclopedia delle Donne) displayed in reception rooms. Pointing my attention to these, she told me that several other elements of her house, such as furniture and decorations have been made in Italy. She mentioned other guests’ reaction to her home-making practices, stating: “In all the bedrooms, upstairs, there is Italian furniture, made of course by Italian artisans. [...] Look here, this chandelier, a famous craftsman in my hometown made it. [...] Have you seen the Capodimonte’s statuette on the bookshelf? [...] All the guests that entered my house, told me, “Hoo, we are in Italy here!” I’m always proud to hear that! I think that in every house of Italians abroad there is a little Italy. At least, in all the houses of Italians I have been in Newcastle, for example, I could see it. I know so many other Italians who have done the same as me.’

(Field-notes, Tina, March 2016)

Tina's example reveals the significance of home as a site for belonging, and the relevance of artefacts to reveal a broader discourse on attachment and identity. This example shows how the activity of furnishing features of the country of destination with items from the country of origin, forges and influences a geographical cultural identity. In fact, Tina took pride in her home-making role to express her national belonging and displaying her connection with places elsewhere.

These themes about material culture and migration have been discussed in detail in the work of Tolia - Kelly (2004), about the home-making practices of South Asian women living in London. She examined how visual and material culture in the new home, acted as landscapes of tradition, heritage and cultural identity. As revealed by Tolia-Kelly (2004), some objects from the homeland might be considered differently, when taken out of that context for a migrant population. In her study, some of the

historical artefacts in South Asian homes were souvenirs from their places of origin. Women in her research mentioned that these curios were considered kitsch or lacking style in their native places; however, they acquired a particular value through being imbued with sentiment, to become symbols of their home nation in the new post-migration context (Tolia-Kelly, 2004). Similarly, as Tina emphasized, some of the objects highlighted by participants in this research, are valuable because they are 'authentically made in Italy'. In emphasising this, Tina distinguished the originality of these possessions, from several imitations currently available in local markets. A particular exemplar is the presence of the Capodimonte statuette, (Figure 13 in final section of Chapter 5) with its decorative details and style, as well as its associations with culture, knowledge and prestige to materialize identity. Therefore, some objects, linking their biographies to their pasts, helped my participants to achieve a continuity in their cultural identity from the past to the present. Hence for Tina, the home-making practice involved in furnishing and decorating her home with items preserved, acquired or ordered from Italy, constituted a way to maintain a link with her home-country – an opportunity to cultivate her geographical identity and enact her cultural belonging.

Moreover, in Tolia-Kelly's (2004) study, these objects were important for individuals in the formation of their personal biographies, but were also situated within a collective sense of identity. Hence, connection to past places through material culture in the domestic sphere that constitute re-memory, became nodes of connection within networks of people, and the collective sense of identity (Tolia-Kelly, 2004). Similarly, Tina remarked that Italian interior design is especially evocative for guests that can recognise its national or local belonging: as I myself did, having witnessed it during the several visits I made to her home, including with other guests. Recognizing 'Italianness' in an English home, through tiled floors, furniture and decoration made in Italy, activated connections with the geographies of places, and constituted a process of identification amongst the group of people present at the time of the interview, to pre-migratory landscapes and environments.

Similar to the example of Tina, some of the other older Italians I worked with considered the house to be a place through which to craft and reinforce their own cultural identity. During the course of my data collection, I witnessed that those who had the economic resources, realized a house in the UK with an Italian architectural style. These houses were inhabited by my participants in later life. An example of this

was the house where I interviewed Angela and Rosalinda. These two participants were sisters, and third generation Italian. Angela is around 80 years old, and Rosalinda is in her seventies. Their grandparents moved to the UK at the beginning of the last century from Lazio Region, and they owned an ice-cream factory in Newcastle. Their reasoning for adopting an Italian architectural style in their home, was detailed in my fieldnotes:

‘Driving towards Angela’s home in Rosalinda’s car, she asked me if I noticed anything in her sister’s house that differentiated it from the other houses in the area. I replied that I didn’t. So she then told me: ‘this is an Italian house!’ She added: ‘look at the stones, the roof, the windows. Can you see the Italian shutters? You will also find the tiled floor inside. To construct this house my sister needed to order materials from Italy, and she also hired an Italian company to build it. It’s the most beautiful house of the area.’

(Angela and Rosalinda, November, 2015)

This example reveals what I mentioned above about the definition of an ‘Italian home’ from an intergenerational perspective. It shows that my participants assumed that I could spot the ‘Italianness’ through their home environments. However, this was not always the case. Moreover, this example figures very interestingly in the discussion about materiality and migration, since not only does this involve things that are mobile (tiled floor, Italian shutters), but also the embodied knowledge of the builders who came over from Italy to do the work.

Drawing on these two examples, it became evident how some of the older Italians who participated in my study, were involved in different sort of actions (holding, replacing, building) that shaped the materiality of the home to reinforce notions of comfort and familiarity. These acts to build the domestic environment according to personal needs or desire, echoes the Heideggarian concept of dwelling (Heidegger, 1971). For Dant (1999), these acts might be associated with the ‘activities of dwelling’ (Dant, 1999, p. 70), that includes house maintenance, decoration, and so forth. However, in my study these activities go beyond the merely domestic actions, since they evoke meaningful implications for the expression of identity. In line with Miller (2002) sense of accommodation in the structure in which we live, my data shows how the appropriation of the home by the inhabitants occurs through the transformation of

significant aspects. Through their everyday lives residing with things and their agreements to the structure of the house, older Italian migrants who participated in my study constituted frame for forms of socialization, expression of the self and narrating identities.

Hence, acts of construction, appropriation, furnishing, which constitute 'home-making practices' are explored in the ethnographic work of Gregson (2007), based on a household-study in a coal-mining village of in the North-East of England. This showed how the practices of inhabitation are fundamental for achieving the state of 'being at home'. Moreover, she suggests that focusing on the practices of placing and displacing things in homes allows a better understanding of people's relations with subjectivity, identities and social relations. In fact, through 'home-making', the participants on my research, pointed to a cultural sense of aesthetic, that was significant to them in different stages of their lives, but that acquired a significant meaning in later life. In particular, this emerged in the cases of the participants who stressed the necessity of adopting creative strategies to reproduce the characteristics of a 'place' in another context. Teresa, introduced in Chapter 4, exemplifies the above. She identified a lemon tree as a significant item in her home (see Figure 14 in the final section of Chapter 5), as detailed in my fieldnotes below:

'This plant is highly visible in her living room, located next to a big window. My eyes were drawn to it since it had several lemons maturing on its branches. I felt enthused to see such a beautiful, familiar plant in England; however, Teresa informed me that the plant was not as 'authentic' as it appeared. She had adorned the real lemon tree plant with some plastic lemons bought in a shop. She justified this by saying:

'It's a mix of a real and a fake one, because, you know, with this weather. I needed to do it. Because, when I was in Italy, my mother used to have lemon trees on the terrace of our home. One particular summer, the lemon tree made 130 lemons, so we gave most of them to all our neighbors. Recently, I bought these [yellow plastic lemons] in a cheap shop, to adorn my lemon tree plant. Does it look nice?'

(Field-notes diary, translated into English, Teresa, March, 2016)

In this extract, Teresa spoke about a natural landscape that she experienced in her family home when she was young, and that she reproduced through her decoration

of the interior of her house in the UK. Through her narrative, I learned about the strategies she used to recreate an 'Italian' ambiance – a world she had left behind many years before – in her British home. As such, the material culture that constitutes the home, and the home-making processes that generate it, are tangible points of connection with past narratives of migration, and contribute to Teresa's sense of identity. The practice of reconstituting the home in the host country, which closely resembles the one from the country of origin has been highlighted by Fortier (2000). In her ethnography on a sense of belonging amongst Italian migrants in London, she acknowledged the importance of the childhood home that is 'reprocessed' in order to achieve a sense of security in the places inhabited after migration. Thus, in the context of my research, this might suggest that some domestic possessions or decorative elements play a role in materializing a sense of nostalgia and loss through migration. However, this might also relate to the role visual and material culture, in the domestic sphere, play in providing a sense of wellbeing in later life. As such, Teresa, in telling me how she was able to decorate her home, highlighted her agency in re-creating a domestic environment in her adoptive land with elements from her country of origin. Thus, she describes herself as an imaginative users of her environment in later life, an agent who appropriates spaces, and creates a sense of belonging by personalization of her dwelling. This is in line with theorization on the concept of place identity as defined by Korpela (1989) reported in Chapter 2, according to which, the personalization of dwelling is an example of how people appropriate and create spaces of rootedness. This has enabled Teresa to establish a sense of identity precariously balanced between her culture of origin and the current one in which she resides – as seen in Chapter 4.

However, these objects are different from those presented by some other participants, as they were not inherited by family members (i.e., Christine's accordion) nor were they 'made', or acquired from Italy (i.e. Tina's adornment). In contrast, these plastic lemons are imbued with different meanings. This reveals a significant insight from my study about ageing and migration, such as that objects cherished are not merely those transported from the country of origin to the new dwelling (Parkin, 1999; Morley, 2000; Basu and Coleman, 2008; Kaiser, 2008) but also those which acquire a symbolic meaning because of their function. Therefore, this example augments the previous literature, by revealing that a sense of home in the context of migration is provided by material culture that can be creatively re-

invented, using available resources. This might be seen as another way in which older Italian migrants 'made' Italy in the context of migration – as Carolina and many other participants asserted.

In line with scholars on material culture, my findings show how some practices of 'home-making' enable participants to re-create what they feel resembles an 'Italian home', such as furnishing, re-placing and so forth in order to re-create a familiar landscape. I argue that these practices have an important role for re-establishing a 'sense of home' in a migrant group and experience a transnational way of belonging even though not mobile. By highlighting the meaning of home as a place where it is possible to re-create a familiar environment, this can be identified as a transnational border between the two national contexts, as the examples reported so far illustrated (Lucia's threshold; Tina's statuette di Capodimonte; Angela and Rosalinda's exterior of the house; and Teresa's lemon tree).

In addition, looking at how familiar landscapes in the context of migration are re-created by older Italian migrants, provide insights into what is 'home' and what is 'abroad' in the context of migration. In fact, these objects do not merely reveal the attachment the participants have to the context they left pre-migration, but also their desire to establish emotional connections to the places they inhabit in later life, as places where they wish to age, as I shall articulate in the next Chapter.

## 5.5 Conclusion: Attachment to Places in the Materiality of Things

This chapter addressed the sense of attachment towards Italy from the perspective of older Italian migrants I worked with. The findings of this chapter are summarized in the diagram below.



Figure 7 Focus on Place Attachment to the country of provenience (Italy): findings

Hence, place attachment to the country of provenience is expressed by: mobility toward places in different period of the year; investment - emotionally and financially

amongst others – agency in creating places in Italy (i.e. private dwelling to be able to move at some point in life, etc.); furnishing or decorating the private dwelling in the UK in order to resemble as much as possible the place in the country of provenience.

In the first section, participants articulated how their movements across nations revealed the subjective meanings associated with places. The data presented helped understand how their mobility across countries and transnational lifestyles was shaped by affective bonds with places. These data revealed that the experiences of ageing across countries through circular or a transnational lifestyle relate in part to social and physical aspects of the environment. As such, there is a shared belief about Italy's positive impacts on their health and well-being in later life ('a place for spiritual refreshment' in Alfredo's example; 'dancing and food' for Christine; perceived well-being 'with the air and seaside [my wife] will recover soon' for Manuel; and outdoor activities 'going out and dance' in Riccardo's case). Therefore, a notion of ageing that derives from the possibility of enjoying places, is a consequence of their transnational lifestyle and mobility across countries. This is in line with previous studies on migration. Fortier, for example, suggests exploring the formation of Italian migrants' belonging in Britain, both in their attachments to culture and movements across places of origin (Fortier, 2000). Despite having identified their 'home' in the UK, these participants demonstrated how older people after retirement wish to maintain transnational ties in Italy. These places acquire important meanings in later life, considering that some within this group of people have invested in building homes in the Italy before they retired.

In this respect, my data is in line with other scholars concerned with how older age intersects with migration. For example, Zontini (2015) who conducted a study with older Italian migrants in the UK, explored how ageing does not necessarily effect a decline in transnational ways of being, but rather can lead to the opposite. Hence, she highlighted that older Italian migrants manifest a desire to re-affirm their own cultural roots. In line with her study, I argue that this is manifested in my population through transnationalism.

In addition, these examples can also reveal how transnationalism reinforces a sense of belonging to an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991). This might explain how a dual sense of affective bonds with places is articulated over time and across generations. In fact, the examples reported have also shown how some ageing

Italians experience multiple senses of attachment to places. Therefore, mobility across countries and attachment to them, should not be viewed as opposite and mutually exclusive phenomena from the perspective of the older Italian migrants I worked with.

A further analytical insight, highlighted by Phillipson (2015), is that movements across nations and the maintenance of transnational ties, are important to take into consideration when studying an older migrant population, as constituting diversity within ageing migrants. Hence, in the second section of this chapter, I illustrated that a sense of attachment to and identification with places is not always determined by engaging in mobility across countries. To explore this point better, I focused on the attachment to Italy from the perspective of those who are less mobile. Some participants, despite not having a transnational lifestyle, remain much attached to Italy (i.e. Domenico, who has not lost his Italian identity and Miranda who has made her 'Italy in the UK').

It has been shown that amongst some older Italian migrants, the home sustained the process of cultural identification in later life. This data highlighted how the re-creation of landscapes left in the context of migration played a role in sustaining participants' sense of identity. This was provided by the role of objects in the domestic sphere and everyday embodied practices: (Lucia's example of switching the language into Italian when indoors; Tina and Teresa's possessions; Angela's house). In line with the research of previous scholars on migration (Tolia-Kelly, 2004; Walsh, 2006; Basu and Coleman, 2008; Vilar Rosales, 2009; Giorgi and Fasulo, 2013), furnishing the house with elements of the country of origin was found to sustain participants' identification with the cultural and geography of places. Moreover, my data adds to this existing literature that some amongst this group of people identified a transnational border between countries by material and symbolic aspects of the home.

In fact, in all the cases presented in this chapter, the people I worked with manifested an attachment to the places inhabited prior migration through material culture. Material possessions provided a physical and symbolic 'sense of home' (Dant, 1999; Miller, 2002), which helps to narrate personal biographies, opening up narration about the self and their own migration history – or their ancestors. However, despite similarities in the practice of collecting and furnishing their English houses with



representation of Italy, meanings attributed to these objects differed amongst participants. Some, use these objects to display a sense of belonging often linked to family bonds (especially for third-generation Italian migrants); for some, these strengthen identities and attachment to the places left; and finally, for other participants, material culture in later life helps re-establish an emotional bond with places inhabited after migration. This emerged by looking at material culture that creates a representation of familiar landscape through artefacts re-produced in the context of migration. This is one of the significant insights in my study on ageing and migration, since it enables reflection on the importance of material possessions that are not merely those carried from the places left, but that can be re-invented creatively using available resources. In fact, from these examples, it emerged that some participants identified practices through which to foster their cultural identity in the places they inhabited in later life. These practices enable the house to be identified as an 'Italian home'. This helps to show how the older Italian migrant I worked with, interpret the concept of place identity as constituted by memories, feelings and ideas about specific physical settings. They show how they create new spaces of belonging by organizing their personal space to maintain and sustain a coherent image of themselves. Moreover, this place identity has been socially constructed during the time of the research encounters between us, and amongst themselves in a nuanced way.

In the light of this, I argue for the importance of material culture in studies on ageing at the intersection with migration, as it as it reveals the attachment people hold to places and their expectation of ageing related to places. In fact, by looking at how familiar landscapes in the context of migration are re-created by older Italian migrants, insight emerges as to what is 'home' and what is 'abroad' in the context of migration. Hence, these objects are not merely revealing the attachment to the context left pre-migration, but also the will to establish emotional connections to the places inhabited in later life – by reproducing the aesthetics of the places left.

In conclusion, through everyday domestic practices, the private domains of the house become a key central place where to inscribe and express cultural identity – language, tradition, values, and beliefs. As illustrated in Chapter 2, according to contributions at the intersection between material culture and migration studies, private dwellings – as embodied practices – should be addressed as meaningful and expressive sites for understanding processes of negotiation and reconstruction of

place-ties. Thus, these examples provide insights into the meaning and significance of 'home' through 'home-making practices', from the perspective of an older Italian migrant population. The findings presented here explained one of the objective of the research that relates to the contribution of material culture to transnational identities of older Italians in Newcastle. In the following, Chapter 6, I unpack the conditions for a sense of attachment to places in the UK.

### **Pictures of objects mentioned in Chapter 5**



Figure 8 Ancient map of the village where the participant's family come from.



Figure 9 Musical instrument: accordion



Figure 10 Accordion and poster of the summer folklore celebration in Italy.



Figure 11 Participants' house in Italy



Figure 12 Participants' village, waterfall in Italy



Figure 13 Statuetta di Capodimonte



Figure 14 Lemon tree

## Chapter 6. The Best Stage of Life

### 6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I illustrated the extent to which a sense of attachment to Italy is manifested through transnationality and 'home-making' practices, and this was found to shape the conceptualization of ageing amongst older Italians in Newcastle. Hence, older age was interpreted, by some participants, as a stage of life in which to 'enjoy' mobility across countries and re-establish an affective bond with places left pre-migration. However, the material culture perspective on home-making practices offered also insights to the expression of place attachment to places inhabited in later life after migration. Thus, this chapter unpacks the concept of place attachment to the country of settlement after migration (UK), as illustrated in the image below (Figure 15).

Sense of home: Place Attachment



Figure 15 *Focus on Place Attachment to the country of destination (UK)*

This chapter looks at the attachment to the UK and shows how the UK aspects of a sense of home are created and how these have transformed identity over the life course. Hence, those older people who reported a higher attachment to the place where they resided, were also those who have framed migration out of Italy in a positive way. In this chapter, I unpack these aspects in more detail by focusing on the sense of attachment to Newcastle and showing how, reflecting upon the process of migration, some 'celebrated' older age as 'the best stage of life'. This conceptualization of ageing appears to be intersected with ideas of attachment and identity to places inhabited.

As explained in Chapter 1, with an increase in the number of older migrants adopting a transnational lifestyle or returning after retirement (Phillipson, 2015; Torres and Karl, 2016; King *et al.*, 2017), a better understanding of the conditions that facilitate or impede a positive experience of ageing in the context of migration is urgently required. Therefore, this chapter seeks to identify what factors shape older migrants' sense of attachment to the places inhabited by exploring how older Italian migrants re-constructed a 'sense of home' in the context of migration. In order to do so, I focus on the narration that emerged in the research encounters by looking at materiality deployed in the context of migration, as symbols of key life transition in the process of migration. Findings show that the materiality considered 'achieved' through migration, provided a 'sense of home', such as a higher sense of attachment to places and a re-established sense of identity in later life.

Amongst the participants of my study, those who reported a higher sense of attachment to the place inhabited are mainly Italian post-war migrants. Therefore, in this chapter, I focus exclusively to the perspective of ageing migrants (rather than this being mixed with participants who are second or third generation Italian, as I previously evidenced in Chapters 4 and 5). In the field of social gerontology and migration study, older economic migrant workers, have received little attention (Zontini, 2015) regardless of the growing concern for global population ageing. In this chapter, I explore how ageing migrants' sense of place attachment appears to be shaped by the relationship established both with places considered 'achieved' through migration and the people who inhabit the places. I illustrate the experiences of 8 post-war economic migrants, as the narratives reported are representative of many more labour migrants amongst the bigger data set. I have chosen these participants as they made explicit reference on the sense of attachment to the place inhabited in later life, during the course of the interviews.

The main argument of this chapter is that participants have re-established a 'sense of home' in their histories of aspiration through migration, and this shapes place attachment, identity and belonging in later life. Findings show that facilitators of place attachment relate to the physical aspects of the environments and the capacity of these in sparking memories of the emotional, intangible meanings attributed to places throughout the course of life. Among these facilitators, a big role is played by upwards social mobility, such as the passage of a person from one social class to another (Richardson, 1977; Goldthorpe *et al.*, 1980; Savage, 2015). Moreover, the

examples presented help to define older age, by highlighting the meanings of the 'achieved places through migration' according to an older Italian migrants' perspective.

#### *6.1.1 Elena's 80th Birthday*

'I have met Elena the first time I encountered all the other members of the Italian Association, during a summer lunch organized in her restaurant on the coast. We were about 50 people. During the lunch, I didn't have the opportunity to talk to her, as I did with others, since she was often busy leading the staff, serving our table. After lunch, I stayed for longer in the restaurant, with three more ladies: Elena's closest friends. When the other 'guests' left, she joined us. She sat at our table to relax. That's how we began to talk.

After a while, she welcomed the four of us in her house, next door, in the same building. She wanted to show them the pictures of her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday that she celebrated not long before. The three ladies attended the party and together they shared memories of the event with me. Hence, I learned, that Elena's family members organized the party in an expensive venue in town. When she entered the venue, in the middle of the room, surprisingly, there was the old pink ice-cream van that Elena and her husband initiated their business with. Elena commented: "When I heard the sound of the motor on, I thought, my husband is here. This was the first birthday I celebrated in my entire life! This van conducted me through this paradise!"

(Elena, Extract from field-notes, July, 2015)

Elena is an 81 years old widow at the time of the interview. She came from a rural village in the Lazio Region. Elena migrated to Newcastle in 1959 with a work permit and worked as a governess in an Anglo-Italian family in Newcastle, for four years. Afterwards, she also assisted in the coffee shop that the Anglo-Italian family owned and learned new skills in trade. Elena's husband D. was Italian, but they met in the UK. Elena convinced him to practise in order to obtain a driving licence. She believed that the ice-cream trade was a prosperous opportunity, and for many years Elena and D. worked as mobile ice-cream sellers, with the old pink ice-cream van mentioned in the vignette above.

The ice-cream van is described by Elena as a vehicle that metaphorically conducted her to 'her paradise'. By this expression, she refers to the place where she lives and works, -as I could witness, these are in the same building-. In fact, Elena told me that together with her husband D., they dreamt of opening an ice-cream shop and to stop working as mobile sellers. Unfortunately, Elena's husband passed away before the property was completed. At the time of the interview, her restaurant on the coast is managed by her children.

In this example, the van is used as a symbolic icon of the older Italian migrant's renovated sense of identity, and that has been interpreted as a tool in reconstructing a 'sense of home' in the context of migration. Therefore, the van, referring to entrepreneurship, is used by Elena to communicate her attachment to places. Thus, Elena is one example of the Italian post-war migrant in Britain who 'celebrated', in later life, migration as an achievement.

However, to grasp the meaning of the pink ice-cream van in Elena's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party, we have to contextualize the episode in her entire life, as, I learned afterwards, when I was invited to Elena's home for an interview. We were alone and she told me more about herself. Her life was characterized, firstly, by displacement and relocation, secondly, by agency and self-determination, and finally, by the experiences of 'achieved places' in later life. These are the three thematic pillars of this chapter.

In this chapter, I use the life-course of Elena throughout as it helps to contextualize a bigger group of participants of this research in their migration process. The three thematic pillars illustrate, respectively, the motivation for migrating out of Italy; the dreams during the early stages of migration; and the meanings of places in later life. Finally, these illustrate the facilitators for a sense of attachment to places inhabited in later life from the perspective of older Italian migrants I worked with.

## **6.2 Post-War Labour Migration and Displacement**

In this thematic pillar, I illustrate how the meanings attributed to places amongst a migrant population have been shaped by specific experiences of displacement (or forced displacement) and relocation in the new dwelling. This allows reflections on the motivation for migrating out of Italy and the strength of place attachment to the



context of migration. This was interpreted, amongst the group of people I worked with, as having had the opportunity of re-constituting a better life.

Consider the example of Elena, who belongs to the group of older Italian migrants previously defined as 'labour migrants'. As explained in Chapter 1, this refers to people who migrated in the UK during the 1950s with job permission, and recruitment schemes (Colpi, 1991; Fortier, 2000)<sup>49</sup>. Likewise most of the Italian post-war migrants who participated in my study, Elena, indicated that difficult economic circumstances in their hometowns in Italy made migration necessary for survival. These participants said they were forced to leave home or encouraged by their closer family members to migrate abroad due to the lack of economic opportunities in that particular social context.<sup>50</sup>

Some of these, mainly coming from areas in South Central Italy, were involved in the final stages of the Second World War<sup>51</sup>. They experienced, during their childhood or youth, forced displacement to nearby towns or villages in seeking to escape from the conflict. This displacement took place before migration out of Italy. For example, Elena's home was damaged during the war, and together with her family, she experienced internal displacement in a nearby village. Elena recalled during the interview the feeling of being vulnerable and under threat before the subsequent movements. Being in search of economic opportunities, she said that she was glad to migrate from her hometown. Migration was also highly desired by her family members who migrated to different destinations: one brother to Canada, together with her mother, and another brother to Belgium. She told me they dreamt that by the process of migration they could have the possibility of starting a new and better life.

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<sup>49</sup> Labour migration flows from Italy were promoted by the organized labour post-war recruitment schemes by the British government Mavroudi, E. and Nagel, C. (2016) *Global migration: Patterns, processes, and politics*. Routledge. Some of these people (generally low or semi-skilled labour migrants) migrated from agricultural areas of Italy, to areas of industry and commerce in the UK. Generally, men were employed in industries and construction, whilst females were destined for domestic service as nannies, cooks and housekeepers. Along with the expansion of services, many Italians were employed in restaurants, in the food trade and as hairdressers (Mavroudi & Nagel, 2016).

<sup>50</sup> On this note, Mavroudi and Nagel's (ibid.) argument about the impossibility of defining clearly the difference between 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' migration, since all migrations, whether economic or political, in some extent involve elements of compulsion. Authors state that migration is 'produced by the combination of economic and political factors and through interactions between human agency and structural forces beyond the immediate control of ordinary people' (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016, p. 119).

<sup>51</sup> Area of South Centre Italy (near Cassino, Frosinone, Arpino where many of my participants came from) were interested in the final battle of the Second World War.

Similar to Elena, some of my participants, remembering their childhood, said it was characterized by several displacements for them and their families. This is the case of Lucia, introduced in Chapter 4. She was around 11 years old when Italian soldiers gave her mother only one day to take a few items from the home where they lived, and move to a nearby town. They were war refugees for nine months. In the meantime, their house was used as a base for German soldiers. In referring to this enforced movement as an emergency, Lucia called attention to the sense of disruption she experienced. After the war, when they returned to their village, their home had been bombed and the land their family used to cultivate was severely damaged. They no longer had a place to live or land to work. As her older sister had moved to Scotland, when she was 18 years old, she should have waited two more years to migrate. Lucia said that in those two years she just dreamt to migrate out of Italy: migration was the only solution to survive. In the country of migration, she said that she had been able to have a peaceful home. Moreover, she is happy in later life, Lucia said, as she has been able to run a fish and chip shop, have two children and grow older in a happy way.

Both these ladies indicated that they had found stability in the experience of relocation somewhere else. Whilst displacement and migration (enforced or willing) amongst older Italian post-war migrants triggered an aura of instability, in younger age, home was central for their sense of security afterwards. Further evidence of this argument can be seen in the example of Carlo.

Carlo is a 76 year old, Italian migrant from Lazio Region. He moved to Newcastle after the Second World War when he was 11 years old, with his mother and older brothers, to escape from poverty. He worked mainly as an ice-cream seller for most of his life. Carlo, and his Italian wife, Anna, both members of the Italian Association where I conducted my fieldwork, invited me home for a formal interview. Carlo and Anna currently reside in one of the most affluent areas of the city. I report the extract of my field work diary when I first was invited to their house:

‘Before welcoming me into their home, Carlo stopped me in the porch of the house to show me a framed photograph<sup>52</sup>. Carlo used the photograph

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<sup>52</sup> Having visited Carlo and Anna's home several times, and with others who were welcomed for the very first time, I had the opportunity to witness the same narration addressed to the newcomers. That portrait, and the story linked to it, might be considered one that he has repeated and performed many times previously and for many different listeners.

as a decorative item, deliberately placed within the porch of the house for people to view it from both inside and outside the home. This frame shows the first house he owned in Newcastle. He had moved home several times throughout his life, but the first property he had bought in the UK was the one that held the greatest significance for him. He and his mother, having migrated from a village in south-central Italy which had been destroyed during the Second World War, came to the UK with no possessions, “nothing apart from debts made from migrating”, he adds. Carlo told me that after renting a property in Byker<sup>53</sup>. He liked to live in there and he felt much attached to it, but they were asked to move from the neighborhood due to urban redevelopment. Slowly, after many years of saving, he was able to buy a property for himself and his family. He said: “When I bought the first house in the UK, then I stopped being a migrant!”

(Carlo, Extract from fieldnotes, October 2015)

In this extract emerges the theme of displacement or relocation. Hence, Carlo listed his several relocations in the interview, in different life-stages: when he was a teenager, he needed to be relocated across countries; a few years later, across neighbourhoods of the same city. The house he bought, symbolically represented through a portrait, and acquires a crucial meaning: it is seen in later life as an opportunity to achieve places ties. This contributed to the sense of place attachment to the country of destination, where the new home is located. Therefore, this example might be interpreted as owning a home in the adoptive land, Carlo was able to ‘re-root his identity in place’ (Basu, 2004). This expression has been adopted by Basu (2004), referring to a re-established a sense of intimate connection with a place, where to ‘feel home’.

Moreover, Carlo’s example poses the question: when does a migrant stop being a migrant? From this extract, it emerges that owning a home in the adoptive land was seen as a key life event, also in reference to a comparison with the status of migration, mobility or displacement. This can evoke a negative connotation, marginality and discomfort related to the lack of a dwelling –both physically and emotionally, in line with previous literature on material culture, illustrated in Chapter 2 (Giorgi and Fasulo, 2013). Therefore, a key point of these findings is the need for the

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<sup>53</sup> Byker is a district in Newcastle (see Pendlebury, J., Townshend, T. and Gilroy, R. (2004) ‘The conservation of English cultural built heritage: a force for social inclusion?’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*. 10(1). pp. 11-31.

physical aspect of a place that helps overcome the feeling of rupture and marginality experienced during displacement. In fact, the participant shows his attachment to the house owned in the UK, through material culture. As such, Carlo's example is in line with the participants illustrated in Chapter 5, according to which the attachment to places was manifested by material possessions cherished in their homes.

Furthermore, these findings resonate with the line of Becker's argument, as highlighted by a study on the importance of the material aspect of the domestic environment among older migrants (Becker, 2003). This research illustrates the complexity around meanings of places among older adults who have experienced displacement in their youth, voluntarily or unwillingly, and often in an emergency. The struggles arising from loss at a younger age have caused this population to have an 'aura of instability to all life' (Becker, 2003, p. 142). The author shows how the narratives related to the sense of disruption from home and homeland, upon migration, are often interwoven in the everyday life discourses about the house they have in the adoptive land. He stated that the process of adjustment and reestablishment of a sense of identity occurred through the medium of a stable home. In line with this, the three reported examples illustrate the sensation of living in a sort of limbo before becoming settled in a home.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the condition of marginality during displacement, the feeling of loss, both material and not material, refers to a liminal condition that has been addressed by scholars on migration (Basu and Coleman, 2008). Therefore, the status of absence in migration was associated with the condition of being in a 'non-place' as theorized by Augé (1995). Thus, migrants have been described as 'attempting to characterize the social and material results of mobility' (Basu and Coleman, 2008, p. 323). By 'result of mobility' the authors refer to the materiality when deployed to recreate the 'sense of home' in the context of migration. This is because, defining migration as a metaphor of translation and transformation, being able to create a 'sense of home' in the context of migration is considered to be a way of achieving a new status (Basu and Coleman, 2008).

These three examples illustrate how securing a home is a key component in overcoming a sense of marginality, given the experience of displacement. As both Elena, Lucia and Carlo remember the desire of early stages of life of having a

‘proper’ home. Therefore, in these cases the ‘material results of mobility’ might be objectified by a place to inhabit, such as the home in the adoptive land.

As illustrated in Chapter 2 and 4, the materiality of home has been widely accepted in gerontology literature as particularly important in the context of ageing (Rowles, 1978; Csikszentmihalyi and Halton, 1981; Rowles, 1983; Sixsmith, 1986; Gilroy, 2005; Peace *et al.*, 2005b; Sherman and Dacher, 2005; Sixsmith *et al.*, 2014). In line with this body of literature, these three examples can suggest that older people who had experienced a loss of home during their younger years, in later life manifest a high attachment to places (such as the home in the country of destination), which provides them with a sense of stability. Therefore, these findings might add to the literature the conditions that facilitate a sense of attachment to the places inhabited by an older migrant population. However, in the last case, the affective relationship established with the private domain of the house is not in reference to the house in which he lives in later life, as generally referred by the scholars on ageing mentioned above. The attachment to the house is not the house in which Carlo is ‘ageing-in-place’ (Hollander, 2001; Andrews *et al.*, 2007; Wiles *et al.*, 2009; Wiles *et al.*, 2012; Iecovich, 2014) as an older adult. Hence, this house was bought in an early stage of migration and appears for Carlo as extremely important, since it refers to a crucial status in the definition of the self.

Therefore, does place attachment in later amongst a migrant population exclusively relate to the physical aspect of the dwelling inhabited? To what extent might it also be linked to the emotional, intangible meaning attributed to these places? I will show next how the sense of attachment to the homes in the context of migration has also been shaped by the processes of economic development post migration.

### **6.3 Achieved Places: Dreams of Aspirations Accomplished in Later Life**

#### **6.3.1 Sense of agency and social mobility**

The findings reported in the section above offer a perspective on the marginality of being in a migrant condition, and, so far, it has been shown how securing a home is a key component to overcoming a sense of discomfort in a migrant population. Moreover, during my fieldwork, narratives about ‘home’ in the context of migration were framed as a material result of mobility.

According to some scholars at the intersection of material culture and migration, a migrant's life project is objectified in the home-making process, as it can be seen as a way to represent the self and the socio-economic condition in the settlement (Miller, 2008b). For example, home, and its possessions, became, for some of the participants of Miller's ethnography, the way one can create an 'aspirational identity' (Miller, 2008b). This derived from the idea that among migrants 'the house was always the primary mode by which life itself was marked as a progression' (Miller, 2008b, p. 401). Drawing on this author, I argue that the physical and material space of a domestic environment provides these participants with respectability due to the opportunity to attain higher social status. I support this argument with the example of Filomena, introduced in Chapter 4.

Filomena said that she migrated when she was young, as she did not like being a 'peasant.' Moreover, she also said that she was not 'made for' the countryside, and she dreamt of becoming 'someone'. By this expression, she explained, she meant learning a different profession. After four years working as a governess, she was a seamstress, until she owned her main business as an ice-cream vendor with her Italian husband. Reflecting on her process of migration through material culture, she said:

'I'm happy to be where I am. [...] I always say to myself "From walking in the countryside, I walk on carpets now." So I'm happy to be in the UK.'

(Filomena, translated into English, November, 2015)

As introduced in Chapter 4, this extract of conversation relates to the positive interpretation in later life of the choice of migration in younger age, due to a sense of perceived improvement of life. In Filomena's case, this is related to the transition from a rural to a worldly lifestyle, symbolized by the meaning she ascribed to material objects in her house. She refers to herself being able to walk on 'the land' in her youth, as this was associated with a rural place – the one she left pre-migration- to manage walking on the carpets in her house. This last item referred to the house she inhabited in the context of migration, as evoking the more sophisticated lifestyle she was able to conduct thanks to migration.

Therefore, in this example, the materiality of the house in later life –or only a few possessions in the domestic environment –pointed to the transformation of the whole way of life, according to this participant's perspective. Thus, Filomena has interpreted

migration as an opportunity of 'climbing mountains', paraphrasing Savage (2015). By this metaphor, the sociologist defined social mobility. The term social mobility refers to the passage of a person from one social class to another (Goldthorpe *et al.*, 1980). Upwards mobility 'was an appealing characteristic of the industrial society (Richardson, 1977) especially for migrants coming from a society with a high degree of occupational closure –with the children of doctors becoming doctors and the children of barristers becoming barristers' (Savage *et al.*, 2013, p. 134). This is the case with the social context that these people left behind.

In line with Miller's argument (2008b), regarding the house as demarking an aspirational identity, as described above, in the four examples reported so far -Elena, Lucia, Carlo and Filomena- migration is interpreted with a positive gaze, as the dream of aspiration pre- migration was accomplished in later life. Hence, these findings have shown that these participants tended to be content with the progress of their lives. Therefore, it can be suggested that place attachment in later life is in part created by upwards social mobility.

To explore this theme further, I consider the example of an older Italian migrant couple I met in the Association where my fieldwork was conducted: Marta and Diego. Marta was from Sicily and her husband, Diego, from Molise. They were both about 75 years old. They met and married in Milan before migrating to Scotland. After many years in Scotland, where their daughter grew up, in 1978 Marta and Diego moved to Newcastle to work in the business that they still own. Similar to the examples reported in the previous section, they also experienced much relocation in their lives. Likewise the example of Lucia presented above, during the interview they highlighted that their life project through migration was to have a peaceful house. Therefore, they had spent their whole life earning money from the fish and chip shop to renovate the house where they still live, and where the interview took place:

'M: I have always said: the shop will realize a better house. And so we did. [...] Little by little when we had money, we also fixed the home. We did it all on our own, little by little, windows, kitchen, bathroom, everything. [...] We were lucky because we have worked a lot. We didn't go on holiday for six years. We never visited our family because we didn't have any money. [...] We had to pay debts. People used to say: "You are fine!" "Yes, but do

you know the sacrifices we have made?" To work, even at night. My husband got up every morning at 5.

S: So what's the meaning of this house?

M: Everything. This house means everything to us, because we have made sacrifices to obtain it. The new generation cannot believe how many sacrifices are needed to buy a house [...] but that's what we have realized, and now that we are old, we are happy about this.'

(Marta, July 2015)

In this extract of conversation, Marta expressed the meaning of the home in later life, recalling the efforts made during the early stages of migration. That is to say, having invested time, labour and money, their home in the adoptive land is infused with memories of the process to obtain it but also in pride in what has been achieved. Marta's sense of place attachment, in this instance, is to a property which in turn is due to the sense of achievement of better life conditions in later life, exemplified by the dwelling itself. These data shed light on the fact that materiality related to achievements during the process of settlement might objectify the dream of aspiration, as we said above. Hence, during my fieldwork, narratives about the material results of mobility helped to reflect on the strategies deployed to re-create a 'sense of home' in the context of migration. By highlighting how the experiences of migration have improved their lives, these people interpreted positively migration in later life thanks to what has been considered to be achieved through migration. Therefore, a key point here is that attachment to places in the context of migration is due to a perceived sense of achievement.

This is in line with theorization of the concept of place attachment based on personal experiences and memories (Manzo, 2005; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). In particular, Manzo (2005) illustrates how experiences in place create meanings that shape attachment. Thus, it has been highlighted how a sense of attachment to places is higher when a place is associated with experiences of personal realization and growth (Manzo, 2005). The findings presented in these sections are in line with this literature, demonstrating how perceived personal improvements in the lifestyle – manifested through the dwelling- shape place attachment.

Furthermore, in this example, the meaning of the home, as a material result of mobility, is conceptualized through labour, emphasizing many sacrifices during the



early stages of migration. As emerged, 'hard work' and 'saving money' were the main motives to migrate, alongside shared values. This echoes with the study of Italian migrants in Britain conducted by Fortier (2000). She highlighted how the trope of sacrifice and sufferance of Italian hard-working labourers in Britain characterized and defined a distinct émigré culture, which echoed for a long time in the immigration historiography.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, these examples illustrate how the trope of sacrifices and achievements through work were revealed to be a key aspect among this population. In fact, in the example of Marta, she highlighted her tireless attitude to working hard and the economic constraints. A further example of this is provided by Elena:

'I never stopped working, I never went out. I never celebrated a party, never. My generation didn't know what it means to have a holiday, and when you don't know something you don't miss it. I tried to save money, to make clothes for my 5 children. I never asked my husband for more money than I needed.'

(Elena, October, 2015)

Most of Elena's narrations were focused on the way she had made an effort to realise a new identity in the adoptive land: our conversation moved from constraints to sacrifices and finally achievements. These achievements in later life were exemplified by the property she owned. Hence, seeking to unpack her sense of attachment to places, she showed me a photo-frame of the property on the coast, as I said in the introduction section of this chapter. Commenting on the sense of attachment to places Elena said:

'S: Do you feel attached more to Newcastle, and not in Italy right?

E: Si! I wouldn't go back. Here, every one of us (Italians) who came had the opportunity to economically develop; everybody had the chance to emancipate. Therefore, I'm feeling attached to the UK. Especially my children, since my husband passed away, bless him. Since he died they have done a miracle. My husband left a van each, so they could continue (to be mobile vendors of ice-cream). He provided them with the tools to

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<sup>54</sup> Fortier (2000) also highlighted how this can reproduce a model of Mussolini's doctrine about the force and energy of Italian-style labour (Smith, D.M. (1997) *Modern Italy: A political history*. University of Michigan Press.). 'Il lavoro nobilita l'uomo' (which stands for 'Work gives dignity to humans') was indeed a slogan used by Mussolini's propaganda that I heard several times by my participants in informal conversations.

start so they could develop their own businesses. I've got all the pictures of the van, and I will show you now, how everything began!'

(Elena, October, 2015)

Showing me the pictures of the ice-cream van, Elena explained to me that, in the course of the following decades, the business had increased. She is proud of her family's economic development, after the life-long effort to guarantee a better future to the next generation. Currently, in later life, looking at the economic progress of her family, she is glad to have migrated to the UK. Therefore, a sense of attachment to the adoptive land derives from what she and her family perceived as achievements through the process of migration.

The photo frame of her house and her business in the same building represent the symbol of her stable achievement, which refers to the materiality of the place, but also its symbolic meaning. Similar to the cases of Marta, Carlo, Lucia and Filomena above, Elena's example shows how the participant established place ties by the improvements in terms of skills and economic emancipation that provided her with a sense of gratitude for the context of migration. Therefore, this is a further evidence of how achievements in the context of migration favour place attachment amongst older Italian migrants.

Drawing on these findings, the meaning of the homes and businesses is closely intertwined and provides ageing migrants with opportunities which create an emotional attachment to places. These are places where they achieve a 'sense of home' in later life. Therefore, a key point of my findings is that, in reflecting on the material results of migration in later life, some of these participants emphasized their agency in the course of their life. In other words, I argue that they 'feel home' in their accomplished histories of aspiration and social mobility.

This is also evident in Carlo's example, linking to the scenario illustrated in the first section of this chapter, when he referred to the process of buying the first house in the UK. Thus far, this home was the central topic of the whole interview, contextualized in a life story comprised of constraints, sacrifices and finally achievements. I report next some extracts of my fieldwork diary:

'Carlo showed me something very valuable to him: some items representing his first years as an Italian in Newcastle. He preserved these

objects within a bedroom, located in his personal drawer, wrapped in a cellophane bag. Between cards and documents, there was his bank book from the local post office from 1956, showing his savings deposits of one pound, fifty pence. He began saving his money when he was a teenager, as soon as he migrated.

Around the table, family and friends shared with him the same sense of pride. I learned from discussing with Anna that he received great pleasure when presenting these objects to family and friends. Moreover, Carlo's Italian male friend, present at the time of the interview, said that it was an honor for all of them (meaning the older Italian migrants) to "celebrate" the economic growth of 'one of us'.

(Carlo, Extract from fieldnotes, October 2015)

In Carlo's example, the attachment to the 'achieved places' in later life is expressed by materiality, highlighting the pride in his economic growth. From this extract, the bank book is an expression of his aspirations, many years earlier, evoking a future of self-transformation. After the experiences of displacement that characterized Carlo's early stages of life, the bank book, the property deeds -and the picture of the home he had purchased, as shown above- celebrated the new identity in later life and had become prized heirlooms. Moreover, these items characterize a range of aspirations of many other economic migrants. Hence, Carlo's friend identified himself with the story being narrated (perceived also by the use of the expression 'one of us'), referring to the sense of belonging to a group of people who emancipated from the 'migrant condition' thanks to the economic development in the context of migration. This is similar to the statement reported above by Elena, who relayed her social mobility to identify a collective Italian migrant identity. This shows, firstly, how the biography of one Italian migrant who had attained a higher social status became, in the context of my ethnography, a social medium for building a collective sense of belonging to a migrant group, and, secondly, how this contributed to bonding people to the places they inhabited. Therefore, amongst my population, accomplished aspirations and achieved goals are seen as key components of attachment to places and identification with them.

All these examples show that the meaning of labour is intertwined with the experience of migration in this group of people. As illustrated in Chapter 1, and in the introduction section of this chapter, the Italian post-war mass migration into Britain

were people who migrated to the UK during the 1950s with permission to work, and recruitment schemes (Colpi, 1991; Fortier, 2000). These schemes consisted of four-year contracts, without the possibility of changing job<sup>55</sup>. Sometimes, the work conditions were not ideal. In some cases, such as Elena, they started as mobile sellers, often in the ice-cream trade, or they were recruited by other Italian businesses for temporary works, enacting seasonal migration flow. As soon as they 'obtained freedom' -to adopt an expression used by Domenico's grandson, in Chapter 4- they tried to have their own business. Therefore, owning a place, either a home or a proper shop, became a stable achievement for them.

In fact, there are many examples of Italian migrants who I have met who use the same rhetoric: whether the object of the discussion is a home, a popular and central business in the city centre, or a small shop in the suburb areas of the town, nothing changes in the sense of pride in revealing how difficult it was to financially achieve it, and how many sacrifices it required in the course of their life to finally owning it.

Seen in this light, these findings help to reinterpret the kind of arguments that anthropologists at the intersection between material culture and migration have highlighted (Basu and Coleman, 2008; Miller, 2008b) about the determination of impoverished migrants who had expectations about the 'land of opportunities'. Hence, it has been argued that migrants have often been framed as 'powerless', hopeless, and characterized by lassitude and despair in displacement (Basu and Coleman, 2008). According to Miller (2008b), migrants are being described as individuals who have to resist within a context of tragedy,

'individuals, who are not merely suffering as a result of their own intentionality of actions, though these are involved, but rather larger forces, something closer to what we might call destiny' (Miller, 2008b, p. 409).

However, these authors highlighted that this representation of emigrants as victims of displacement contrasts with agency and self-determination. Hence, the impoverished migrants arrived in what has been framed as 'the land of opportunity' (Basu and Coleman, 2008). Therefore, Basu and Coleman (2008) suggested adopting a different view of the migration process in terms of it being a metaphor for translation and transformation. The authors wrote:

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<sup>55</sup> The only way to 'obtain freedom' before the fourth year was marriage to an English partner.

‘migration, then, is a process, and the materiality deployed can indicate the changing status of a given migrant over time – the transformation of their place within the “world” they have entered, willing or not’ (Basu and Coleman, 2008, p. 324).

According to the examples above, either the home in the context of migration or the business are tangible proofs of a life-long effort to accomplish an aspirational identity, made visible in the metaphor of transformation through migration. Therefore, a key aspect of my data is that material culture was found to contribute to the process of negotiating and re-constructing the individual’s sense of identity –as well as collective migrant belonging –and attachment to the country of destination in later life. Moreover, later life is described as a stage of life where it is possible to celebrate an achieved ‘sense of home’ in the accomplished histories of aspiration. This analytical point has become much more relevant in my thesis as concerned with a sense of attachment to, and identification with the context of migration, in later life, in a migrant population, and this now emerges as the third thematic pillar of this chapter, discussed next.

### *6.3.2 Celebrating achievements in later life*

As I said in the introduction of this chapter, Elena’s van represents, firstly, a tool through which a relationship established with places is made visible (the participants’ paradise) and, secondly, how a sense of identity in later life has been re-established. To add another analytical point, I illustrate how older age is defined as a stage of life in which to celebrate achievements. In fact, it is defined as the ‘best stage of life’ due to the relationship established with places.

The celebration of the ‘first birthday’ of Elena’s life made visible how the experience of migration is interpreted as an achievement only in later life. Thus, the pink ice-cream van at Elena’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party helps to contextualize older age in the context of migration, as it can objectify the ‘social and material result of migration’ (Basu and Coleman, 2008). Marking the material and social progression in the process of migration, the migrant’s ‘sense of home’ seems to be accomplished at the latest stage of life. Therefore, later life becomes a sort of re-birth, due to economic stability and the possibility of celebrating the birthday at a luxury venue.

In Elena’s celebration of her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, the presence of the pink ice-cream van reminded her of the effort of rebuilding the self in the new environment. The van held

a great meaning for the family, and this shifted over time; thus, it was invested with new significance: it stopped being a tool for sacrifices and was acknowledged as a commemorative icon of success and entrepreneurship. Hence, the image of the first pink ice-cream van is also used as a decorative item for a birthday party for family members.

This echoes with the work of other scholars who have been engaged with material culture and migration. Savaş' ethnographic study (2014), for example, explored the experience of resettlement of Turkish migrants in Vienna. Her research focused on the materiality of everyday objects embedded with memories, shaped by specific experiences of displacement and relocation in the context of migration. The author reports the story of a 64-year-old Turkish labour migrant who cherished their first tea glasses for more than 30 years. These objects reminded him of a particular experience of marginality and discomfort in the early stages of migration, which have been attributed the role of 'bringing good luck' and 'embody[ing] the participant's success during the early stages of migration. Tea glasses were used to celebrate his new sense of self in later life (Savaş, 2014). Thus, the narrative around Elena's pink ice-cream van express gratitude to the context of migration of such improvement of life. And this, as shown before, contributed to the sense of attachment and identification with places in later life.

In a parallel fashion, consider the case of Mario. Mario came from Lazio and migrated in 1964, when he was 22 years old. This participant differs from the others I have introduced in terms of the timeframe in which he migrated. However, he still needed a work permit to move abroad. Throughout my fieldwork, I met Mario several times on different occasions, and each time he wanted to clarify that he has never defined himself as a migrant but as a 'professional in mobility'. Mario also left his hometown looking for a better job, but he considered himself 'different' from those who had migrated before, as when he moved to the UK he already had a professional background. He said that he was 'called' to be hired as a 'hairdresser'. At the time of the interviews, he owned a barber shop in the city centre. During our research encounter he showed me the pictures of his first years in Newcastle, when working as a hairdresser, and he said:

'I always wanted to leave Italy, as I wanted to be free to realize myself alone. I have always been very ambitious, but my family was too strict.

You could not make any mistake. Before taking a decision, you needed to be a hundred per cent sure for them. [...] So I was called here to work as a hairdresser. But then I wanted to create my own business. We went to the bank to get a loan, here, in Northumberland St. I still remember that day. “Who are you?” he asked. “Do you have any guarantee?” “No, we don’t”. We had nothing. We were just four impoverished Italians, at the time. “But we know our profession. We know what we want.” This man believed in us. He gave us credit. And we gave our word. Trust is the most important thing in life. You don’t have to lose it. [...] And here you go. I worked here for my entire life. This barber shop has been going since 1966. [...] No failure. No benefit. We received trust from this country and we washed their heads, bringing the Italian style. That’s my pride in later life. I want to wait for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary to retire. Later on, I can enjoy it. Now I think that’s the mejo gioventu.<sup>56</sup>

(Mario, November 2015)

Mario narrated the process of obtaining his barber’s salon in Newcastle City Centre. This business was his great achievement after the process of migration, and was due to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in May 2016, the day he had decided to retire. During my fieldwork, I participated in this event, as it was significant for all the community of people I worked with, as I said above, asserting the constitution of a collective migrant identity. The pride of having realized an ongoing business helped to establish a sense of self-esteem, in later life, that can be shared amongst members of the same community. In line with the argument suggested above, from an impoverished Italian, Mario turned to be a popular business owner. Therefore, this example gives a clear understanding of how the migration process and dream of aspirations in younger age, influenced a sense of identity in later life.

Moreover, looking at the materiality deployed to recreate the ‘sense of home’ in the context of migration, Mario revealed his sense of place attachment to the country to which he migrated, where he was given the possibility of developing his professional skills. He illustrated that these bonds with the place were created by the sense of credibility he received, even though he was a foreigner and had no guarantee for the bank should his commercial activity have failed. However, having received trust, he

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<sup>56</sup> “Mejo gioventu”. Roman slang. “the best youth.”

felt he needed to keep that promise and therefore later life became a stage in which to 'celebrate' the accomplishment of his dreams of aspiration.

Drawing on these ideas, we can consider the material culture mentioned in the data above (Filomena's carpet, Marta's home, Carlo's bank book, Elena's pink van, Mario's photographs) as treasured objects that represent the process of transformation after migration, objects that can 'exhibit' the higher economic status. In this respect, Hoskins (2006) asserted that:

'people who surrounds themselves with biographical objects do so to develop their personalities and reflect on them, (...) and use them as part of a narrative process of self-definition' (Hoskins, 2006, p. 78).

She explains how some objects can be useful to mediate between past and present. These objects that my participants cherished, and which were presented to me during our research encounters, symbolized their lifelong efforts to rebuild the self in the new environment, after the process of migration. Drawing on these reflections, it seems that there is a need to look beyond the concrete aspect of a place to highlight how these material possessions were imbued with significant meaning due to a developed sense of agency in later life.

These examples show how reflecting on migration through material culture can highlight how some older Italian migrants express their relationship with places, in a renovated sense of identity. I argue that this is because these participants feel home in their stories of aspiration pre-migration. In turn, this can reveal the facilitator of the sense of place attachment, identity and belonging to the country of destination. As such, according to my data and the literature illustrated above, I would argue that these narratives about the material results of mobility helped to contextualize ageing in the context of migration, providing a positive sense of well-being. To add another analytical point, I will focus on what Mario meant to identify 'ageing as the best youth' highlighting the current use of these public places according to older Italian migrants.

#### **6.4 Older Age as the 'Best Youth': Enjoying Places 'Where to Feel Home'**

In the previous section, I illustrated how investigation of the meaning of material culture related to aspirational identity was found to strengthen affective bonds with places inhabited at the time of interview, amongst an older Italian migrant population. Considering that most of the ageing migrants I have met have or had a private



business in specific economic sectors (fish and chip shops, ice-cream parlours, restaurants, and barber salons), upon reflecting on their process of migration, they used material culture, referring to entrepreneurship as a symbolic icon of their attachment to places. Moreover, the examples have shown how the meaning of the labour is intertwined with the experience of migration, and how the meaning of the home is intertwined with the meaning of business. Therefore, I have called attention to a sense of attachment to, and through, achieved places in later life, which materialized, interchangeably, by private places (dwelling) and public ones (businesses). This occurred because the physical and metaphorical boundaries between a 'sense of home' and the meaning of business in the context of migration are blurry. In this section, I illustrate how ageing Italian migrants established an affective bond with the business in later life, referring to these as places 'where to feel home'.

As we have seen from the above examples of Mario and Elena, some of the businesses initiated in the early stages of migration were still active at the time of data collection. Therefore, amongst these participants, the highest sense of attachment to these places is due to both the physical and symbolic aspects of the environment. Participants reported the sense of pride in being able to see, in older age, the continuity of these businesses over time, especially when these have been inherited by family members (children or grandchildren). Thus, as we have seen with the example of Elena before, these places symbolize the life-long effort to guarantee a better future to the next generations.

Moving on to the sense of attachment to these places because of the social aspects of the environment, during my fieldwork, I found that before or after retirement participants reported spending a great amount of time in these shops, either engaged in activities or socializing with customers. This contributed to a higher sense of attachment with places and consequentially a positive sense of well-being in later life, as I show next.

In some cases, the amount of time that older Italian migrants spend in their business is facilitated by the fact that the two properties –shop and house –are physically connected to each other. In this case, always being surrounded by people (either staff or customers) was found, firstly, to provide opportunities for social connectedness and feeling active, and, secondly, to contribute to a sense of safety,

especially when living alone. For example, Elena's home and the restaurant managed by her children are divided only by a small garden. She said:

'When I finish cleaning my house in the morning, I have nothing else to do. So I go there, you see, from this door. There is always something to do in there. Sometimes, I just help setting the tables or welcoming the customers. In the evenings, they check if I'm all right, so I feel safer living here.'

(Elena, October, 2015)

Elena illustrated how she spends time in the restaurant; she enjoys having a chat with customers or helping with little jobs. The restaurant keeps her busy during the daytime, and she feels well respected and useful. Moreover, in this case, living next to the family business was found to increase the ageing migrants' sense of safety, by the presence of relatives, staff, and customers who can provide help. This mirrors the findings of Walsh *et al.* (2012), as addressing social relations in ageing. These scholars pointed out at the importance of the perception of having someone around if needed, amongst older people in rural sites, as potential source of assistance in period of infirmity. Similarly, social networks provided by living closer to the family business, was shown to be fundamental for experiencing a positive ageing in Elena's case.

As in Elena's example, Marta's two properties – shop and house –are physically connected to each other, so she spent much of her time in the fish and chip shop, managed by Marta's grandson, who was about 25 years old. Marta is proud of the fact that her grandson could benefit from their activities to have a job. She said that she feels useful helping him, for example, preparing food for his lunch break. She feels less lonely having the possibility of accessing the shop by the door in the back garden, instead of being at home on her own. Similar to Elena, she said that by having people around in the shop she feels that someone is always looking after her, in case she might need it. This shows how having a support network is important for these ageing migrants.

Consider the example of Armando, who at the time of the interview was 69 years old. Armando comes from Lazio region. He moved to Cambridge in 1965 with a work permit as a carpenter and afterwards moved to the North East to work with his brother. After being a mobile ice-cream seller for most of his life, he opened an ice-

cream parlour on the coast together with his wife. The ice-cream parlour became a restaurant over time, and their children manage it. This business has a living room on the second floor, where our interview was conducted. Armando reported that he often spent his evenings there watching television and looking after his grandchildren, when the younger family members are downstairs to work. Armando and his wife described this place as their 'second home'. Being pensioners, they have more time now to dedicate to other activities than work. So, Armando said, he could help their children by being engaged with the grandchildren to enable them to work easily. Hence, he showed how these places helped him and his wife to feel active and independent but socially connected to others.

These three examples show how the higher sense of attachment to the businesses is due to opportunities to have social moments with family members. This can be interpreted adopting the concept of 'social insideness' theorized by Rowles (1983) according to which knowing others and being known by them provide a sense of connection with a locality. In line with the literature on social gerontology about Italian older migrants (Baldassar *et al.*, 2006; Ganga and Scott, 2006; Baldassar and Gabaccia, 2011), these participants appear to link the attachment to places to the role these played in the family sphere (Marta in providing food for the grandchildren; Armando in playing with grandchildren). Similarly, other participants reported how these places offer opportunities primarily for socialization within the context of the family, but also with the staff and customers, as will be shown by the following examples.

Luigi was 84 years old at the time of the interview, and comes from Liguria. Being interested in learning English, as he was fascinated by Frank Sinatra's songs, he applied for a job as a hairdresser and subsequently moved to Newcastle in 1959. After having worked as hairdresser for most of his life, he invested in opening a restaurant. In later life, he found great pleasure in his restaurant in Newcastle's city centre, managed by his younger child. He used to attend this place in the morning and read the newspapers, and had lunch there almost every day; therefore, similar to the example of Armando above, he considers it his 'second home'. During the fieldwork, whenever I wanted to meet with him, I also considered Luigi's restaurant as his 'home' because the young members of the staff knew exactly what he was doing at any time, and I could always leave a message for him there. Regarding the relationship he has with his own staff he said:

'I have great respect for all of the people who work for us. It is like a family, and I think it is important in later life to be surrounded by young people. I enjoy my time with them. The guys of the staff are always nice to me, they want to learn Italian so I say: "Buongiorno"!'

(Luigi, February 2016)

Moreover, as mentioned by Luigi above, these places strengthened their affective bonds with the places inhabited, thanks also to the relationship established with the people there. In teaching a few Italian words to the staff he felt well respected. As Smith (2009) has demonstrated in the case of migrants, being able to speak about their own language is a pleasant experience in ageing as it provides the possibility of being culturally grounded. Moreover, the meaning of these places lays in the sense of respectability they convey, having provided a career for many other people, he adds. Luigi referred to the sense of respectfulness acquired from the staff, and Armando pointed out the importance of the customers of his commercial activity in helping him to feel bonded to places.

'On a sunny Sunday, I can't be indoors. I have to meet "my people", my customers, who are also my best friends. Because, you know, our ice-cream shop customers are also the people we know better, since we sold ice-creams to those who are now grandparents. Afterwards, to their children, who are parents now. So you have seen all the generations. And they know us as their favorite 'gelataro'<sup>57</sup>. When I drive my van, they tell me "Hello!". I feel happy. Now, we have the ice-cream shop on the coast. When you create a business activity from zero, is difficult to stop, you know? I do it to be active, not for money anymore. I do it as a hobby. That always has been my attitude since I moved to Newcastle. My wife and me, we like to stay at home, but actually, here, we get to talk to people, and help our children if they need it.'

(Armando, October 2015)

Armando retired when he was 65 years old, although he could not stop working, he said. Sometimes, he revealed, he enjoys driving his old ice-cream van to sell ice-creams, showing how difficult it is for him not being involved any longer in their previous work activities. This last example reveals the importance of work and

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<sup>57</sup> "gelataro": slang word in Rome for : ice-cream seller

identification with it, and how hard it was to detach from that identity in later life. I draw on the work of Meier (2016) on retired migrants worker, through life narrative interview methodology. This study is based on the history of Emilio, a Spanish older migrant moved in Germany and ageing there. Emilio is not nostalgic for a lost home, as he adapted to both countries. However, after his retirement, he “feels a nobody” but because he is no longer part of the work process. His sense of being ‘out of place’ is not associated to his national or ethnic identity, but instead to his sense of not belonging to the working class, as approaching retirement stage. As such, I focus on the work- life course, to illustrate how this is especially significant to for those labour migrants who I worked with.

Moreover, Armando pointed to the social aspect of the environment as playing an important role in the sense of wellbeing in later life. Armando revealed he is attached not only to his own place, but also to the people he used to know in the local community. This manifests how the sense of attachment to places in later life is also given by the relationship established with people who inhabited those places.

Similarly, Mario is happy to have contributed to finding a job in his business to many other people (Italians and not Italians). He says that, thanks to this, he is well known and respected in town. This gives him a high sense of attachment to the place he inhabits as he feels he contributed to ‘creating a place’. Hence, Mario used to say that his barbershop became a meeting centre for many men in town:

‘It is like they are coming to my house. They come in, take a seat. Some used to walk in, even just to socialize whether it was for their haircut or not. They just like to have a chat sometimes with us. So we use to know many people. And I don’t feel I’m at work here, but constantly surrounded by friends. [...] I will continue to come to this shop, of course, when I retire. How can I stop? There are the loyal customers who come to have an “Italian chat”, and newcomers looking for information about the city, and I feel I can bring people together. So I love to be here.’

(Mario, November 2015)

Having spent some time myself in the barber shop, which has been attended by the same loyal customers for years, it is clear that it is a social hub for many Italian men of different generations who go there just to meet each other. This helps Mario enact social relationships. The example of Mario adds to the previous point about how the

sense of attachment to these places is intertwined with the people who use to attend them (such as immediate family, but also former colleagues or customers). Moreover, Mario describes how being in his Italian barber shop is also an opportunity to re-discover his Italian identity. As shown by Mario, there is not only a sense of career achievement in these places, but a sense of personal satisfaction for having constructed over time a place where many others feel belonging. In these last examples, feeling active and being surrounded by young people was found to contribute to a positive sense of well-being in later life. Therefore, a high sense of attachment to the neighbourhood and local community in which ageing migrants spend time is given by the opportunity of cultivating these relationships in places constructed by them.

As illustrated in Chapter 2, in social gerontology, the social aspect of the environment has been largely acknowledged as important for older adults' sense of well-being (Rowles, 1978; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Peace *et al.*, 2005a). Similarly, being embedded within a network of supportive relationships act as a practical resource for ageing people (Walsh and O'shea, 2008; Walsh *et al.*, 2012). In line with this literature, these findings on the significance of places sheds light on the social aspect of the environment for older migrants in providing opportunities to meet people they feel they belong to (family members, staff or customers, locality). As shown by the literature on ageing in the context of migration (Becker, 2003; Bolzman *et al.*, 2006), living in close proximity to a support network is a key component of the everyday experience of places, that have an impact on health and well-being amongst ageing migrants.

Therefore, a key point of these findings that can contribute to the literature explored in Chapter 2 is that, after retirement, these places are beneficial in overcoming isolation and loneliness, as this is shown to be a problem amongst a migrant population (Victor *et al.*, 2012). These findings may challenge the common trope on ageing migrants at risk of social exclusion (Scharf *et al.*, 2005) as being not jeopardized within these environments, as they receive respect from the people (staff and customers) who surround them. In contrast, the findings illustrated in the previous chapter, showed how the lack of social relationships in later life, due to a sense of loneliness and isolation amongst ageing migrants, generated frustration and a 'sense of not belonging' to the place inhabited. These findings resonate with the study of Buffel *et al.* (2014) on the contextual factors that facilitate or impede place

attachment among older adults in Belgium. The qualitative findings of this study indicate that the social aspects of the environment is a condition that impacts on place attachment. In particular, the possibility of meeting people and 'staying in touch with younger generations' (Buffel *et al.*, 2014, p. 812) was found to contribute to a higher sense of attachment to the place inhabited.

Moreover, these examples have shown that public environments have the potential to provide a transnational experience through the possibility of speaking Italian in these places, both with staff or customers. Hence, these places might be seen as transnational places of belonging (Schiller, 2004). In this regards private places are similar to private dwellings illustrated in Chapter 4.

Thus far, my study adds to the previous literature on place attachment in an ageing migrant population that the relationship established with places in later life is shaped by having identified a 'sense of home' in the country of settlement. The sense of attachment, identification and belonging help overcome the issues of ageing in the context of migration. Consequently, later life can be a stage of life in which to 'celebrate', a personal sense of identification with places and constitution of 'places where to feel home'.

So far, it has been established that a positive experience of ageing amongst older Italians in Newcastle has been shaped by attachment to places, due to upwards mobility, economical achievements and business success after migration. However, it is not my intention to argue that attachment to places inhabited is expressed only as a result of material and tangible achievements. Hence, I will show here the example of a participant who reported to experience positive ageing and attachment to places inhabited after migration, even in the absence of any economic mobility after migration. I down on a case of Renzo, who met his English wife in Italy, married her and moved to the UK only for a reason: love.

Renzo is a 75 years old from Marche Region who lives in Newcastle since he was in his twenties. He migrated to Switzerland for some seasonal work and back to Italy as, having a professional background as sommelier, he was working in a hotel in his hometown. During the summer '69, M., from Newcastle, went on holiday in the same village with a friend. The two English girls were studying Italian and employed for 6 months in Italy in a bar. Renzo and M. met and decided to get married. One year later Renzo moved to Newcastle only for spending his life with his wife. Renzo and M

continue traveling to Italy at least twice per year, they are very active and socially engaged. At the time of the interview, he defines his life very successful, his ageing very positive and his attachment to Newcastle very high. Thus, the definition of a successful migration, in cases like this, is inestimable.

As I said above, this example, was included in this chapter to enhance the diversity of a migrant population, by challenging the stereotype of migrants (who are not only economic/labour migrant), and by addressing the variety of ways in which the idea of creating a sense of home in the context of migration might be subjectively interpreted, created and contested. Thus, this last example shows how the attachment to the place inhabited after migration is not only due to successful stories of economic achievement.

## **6.5 Conclusion: Place-Making and Well-Being in Later Life**

This chapter illustrated that some older Italian migrants, more than others, had established a 'sense of home' in the context of migration. These are those who manifest a high sense of place attachment to the country of destination and identification with the places inhabited. This is manifested, in particular, amongst those who interpret migration as an achievement in later life. These ageing migrants consider their accomplished histories of aspirations to be the facilitators of a sense of attachment and identification with places, highlighting their agency and self-determination, in 'the land of opportunity'.

To fully understand these conditions that facilitate place attachment to, and identification with, the context of migration among this population, I focused on the way migration was framed as a metaphor of translation and transformation. Namely, I looked at how materiality deployed in the context of migration helped to reconstruct a sense of attachment to the places inhabited in later life. Firstly, I have demonstrated how the materiality of the domestic environment shaped a different sense of attachment and identity among the group of people with whom I worked. Private dwellings played the role of overcoming the marginality of a migrant condition in the first year of migration, after displacement. Therefore, it was suggested that the physical aspect of a place inhabited shaped a high sense of attachment in later life. Secondly, narratives about places inhabited were focused on perceived achievements through migration, highlighting the role of representing the self with agency and self-determination in later life. On the one hand, the migrants' project of



aspiration might be seen to have been accomplished in later life, with the construction of a home in the adopted land. On the other hand, entrepreneurship was used as a symbolic icon of the renovated sense of identity after migration. Therefore, it has been suggested that not only the tangible aspect of the environment, but also the emotional meaning attributed to these places is seen as key components of sense of attachment in later life. This is because these places favour a re-definition of a social identity and the role in society. Finally, I have illustrated the everyday experiences in the current use of these places, providing older Italian migrants with a social relationship, and a sense of self-esteem. In particular, I have highlighted the role these places has in later life by providing opportunities for social connectedness and overcoming isolation. As older age has been defined as 'the best youth', the social aspect of these environments has been shown as strengthening sense of attachment, identity and belonging to local communities and neighbourhoods.

As such, dreams of aspiration pre-migration are made visible by physical and social environments 'where to feel home'. Therefore, these held the meaning of stable achievements after lifelong effort of a re-negotiated places ties in the context of migration. Reflection on the concept of social mobility helps to contextualize their lives as being a successful migration, and older age as a stage of life when it is possible to 'celebrate' the accomplished dream of aspiration. Therefore, it can be argued that these older Italian migrants 'feel at home' in their histories of aspiration. Thus, the process of re-establishing a 'sense of home' in the context of migration has been shown as influencing a sense of identification with places and well-being in later life.

This image below (Figure 16) summarizes the findings of this chapter, by illustrating the factors that shaped place attachment to the country of destination: social aspects of the environment and social mobility. These can be defined as facilitators for place attachment to the country of destination. Moreover, the diagram shows that place attachment determine the investment – emotionally and financially amongst others- in creating places and communities in the UK.

## Sense of home: Place Attachment

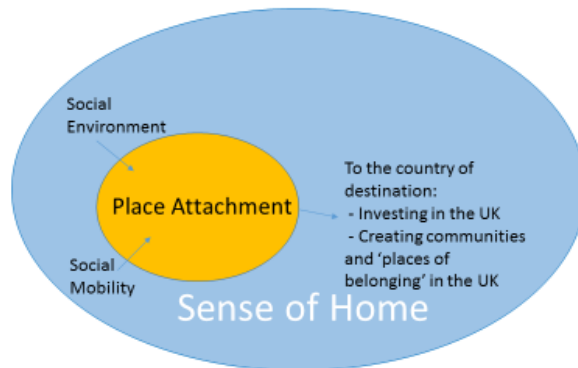


Figure 16 *Facilitators of place attachment to the country of destination*

## Chapter 7. Barriers to identification with places: ‘othering’ and discriminations

### 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapters explored the subjective construction of a sense of attachment and identity. By contrast, this chapter focuses on the collective nature of the relationship between persons, identities and material setting. To do so, I illustrate the point of view of participants that, although characterized by a high sense of attachment to the places inhabited, reveal a complex sense of identification and belonging with these. These participants report to have experienced discrimination for their ethnic minority identity, thus have been considered ‘othered’ by the local context in which they lived. Therefore, this chapter considers the barriers to a ‘sense of home’ in later life from an ageing migrant perspective. This shows how places can become a contested arena of collective being and belonging by bringing to view historical and political nature of identification with places.

In this chapter, I focus on the social and cultural context of the country of settlement, determined by the historical contingencies, that shaped both place attachment and place identity of older Italian migrants in Newcastle.

Sense of home: Social and cultural context

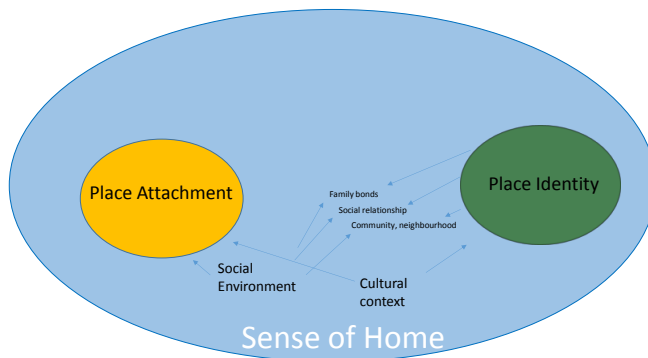


Figure 17 *Social environment and cultural context shape a sense of Place Attachment and Place Identity*

As I anticipate in the introduction of this thesis (Chapter 1), the social and cultural context of the place of migration will be explored through the memories and experiences of first and third generation Italians, as I am interested in understanding how some narratives related to place identity were passed on to by generations. This

inform on a shared set of cultural experiences, the legacy of which continue to inform notions of home amongst first, second and third generations of migrants.

As my fieldwork progressed, it became increasingly apparent that often daily discourses about identity and belonging were shaped by reference to the historical events of the Second World War. Hence, most of the people with whom I was engaged in conversation, explicitly or implicitly, divided their presence in places that they continued to inhabit, between the pre- and post-war period, in a very complex manner. Therefore, I acknowledged the relevance of these oral histories for the main argument of the thesis. Thus, in this chapter, I illustrate how some historical events might have forged a sense of identity and belonging amongst the participants of this study.

Overall, I have not explored the details of the historical events that I report in the following sections, but have tackled these from a different angle: I highlight the impact of the Second World War in the process of self-representation and everyday construction of a national and a cultural identity, arguing that it might had an impact on these people 'sense of home'. This chapter focuses on the anti-Italian feeling experienced by some of the older Italians in Newcastle, during the Second World War and the following decades (1950-1970), which shaped attribution of ethnic belonging and relationships within the local communities.

I illustrate, firstly, the impact of the War on those who experienced it by inhabiting these places, highlighted by the memories of their childhood. This helps to understand the role played by places in activating social memories and bonding people to places. This is explored through the conceptualization of social memory practices (Degnen, 2005) according to which the bond between people and places is made manifest in the everyday act of remembering. This shows how my findings add to the work of Degnen (2005) in explaining how people become linked to groups through social memory. Finally, in line with Degnen (2016), data illustrate how attachment through places is constituted by a highly social component. Secondly, the anti-Italian feeling is considered across generations by exploring the impact of these memories of Italians who migrated during the years after the Second World War. I draw on the concept of 'overwhelming inherited memory' as theorized by Hirsch (2008) to explain how some powerful and painful memories were passed through generations. The overall argument of the chapter is that social memories,

constructed amongst older Italians contributed to how – and where –these people expressed their cultural identity by highlighting how the process of ‘othering’, might have influenced the construction of a sense of identity. This is addressed by considering the historical dimension on the concept of place attachment as articulated by Burholt (2006).

Three sections constitute this chapter. The first section begins by framing the context of discrimination during the Second World War, focusing on the xenophobic riots experienced by Italians resident in the UK during the conflict. It considers the impact of the politics of internment, deportation, and their associated meanings among those who experienced it. The second section illustrates how the wartime rhetoric of ‘Italians as enemy aliens’ influenced my participants’ expression of cultural and national belonging in their everyday life, differently in the private or in the public sphere. These two sections focus on the memories and interpretations of the socio-cultural context in the UK during the Second World War from the perspective of five British subjects of Italian origin who are mainly third generation Italians; in this chapter, these participants are defined as ‘Anglo-Italian.’<sup>58</sup> Finally, the third section of the chapter indicates the impact of the ‘enemy aliens’ trope during the two decades following the conflict. This information arose through the perspectives of a further four participants, who migrated from Italy during the years after the Second World War. Hence, these first-generation migrants learned about ‘anti-Italian feeling’ from existing Italian residents who had been living in the UK for a long time, or through their own experience of perceived discrimination, showing how it has been reiterated over time.

## **7.2 ‘Enemy Aliens’ in the UK during the Second World War**

The focus of this section is based on readings that shed light on the experience of Italians in the UK during the Second World War (Colpi, 1992; Sponza, 1992; Fortier, 2000; Sponza, 2000; Ugolini, 2011; Shankland, 2014). As highlighted in Chapter 1, this body of literature emphasizes the rhetoric of the ‘enemy alien’ as one of the most powerful motifs about the Italian presence in Britain because of the emblematic experiences of: localised incidences of verbal and physical abuse; the internment of

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<sup>58</sup> At the time of interview, participants referred to themselves adopting ‘bi-cultural’ self-definition, underlying the centrality of Italianness and Britishness in the construction of personal identity, as explored in Chapter 4.

Italians in prisoner of war camps; forced relocation of Italian families from the coast to inland areas. I will address these themes in the section that follow<sup>59</sup>.

### *7.2.1 Xenophobic riots and marginalization within local communities*

In line with the historical accounts of the Italians in North East England (Shankland, 2014), the data gathered during the course of my fieldwork have shown that British-born citizens of Italian origin found themselves in a hostile environment, after the anti-Italian feeling erupted with the outbreak of the Second World War. This was reported by Alfredo, a participant introduced in Chapter 4:

‘A: When I was born, in 1944, the war was still on, we fought in Italy, and in the first years after the war, there was a lot of anti-Italian feeling, people were breaking your windows, shouting at you in the streets, [...] in my first years, it wasn’t sensible to be Italian. Now I’m an old man, so I’m fine with my Italian side, but as a young boy I was very shy, very frightened.’

(Alfredo, July 2015)

Alfredo, as a British born child of Italian origin, emphasized having been uncomfortable with his Italian background during and after the years of the Second World War. He pointed out that the anti-Italian feeling he experienced at a younger age undermined his sense of identity, despite becoming comfortable with it in later life. A similar perspective was revealed by Mrs G.<sup>60</sup>, a second generation Italian.

Mrs. G was 86 years old when interviewed, and her family came from the Tuscany Region at the beginning of the century; they had lived ever since in a town on the coast near Newcastle, and owned an ice-cream shop. Our research encounter took place in the same building, which constituted the house and the shop where her family lived, and where she was born in 1930. Mrs. G. said:

‘G: When the Second World War broke out, we didn’t know how things were going to go, whether Italy was going to be on the German side, or whether they were coming on the English side, as in the First World War. So, of course, when Italy went with the Germany side, well we were the

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<sup>59</sup> It should be acknowledged the tragic sinking of the Arandora Star that I have no space to discuss in this dissertation.

<sup>60</sup> The participant was willing to participate in the audio-recorded interview, but did not want to be identified. As, at the time of the interview, she lives in an area where there are few Italians, any details about her place of origin and her place of residence will be omitted to protect her privacy and anonymity. See later also Ugolini (2011) for the meaning of silence for Anglo-Italian people with a traumatic memory of the Second World War in the UK.

only Italian people here, you know, and the people, some people didn't like us anymore, no. It was a very difficult time for us, a very difficult time.

S: What happened to the Italian people?

G: In some parts of Scotland, for instance, some of the Scottish people even went to the fish and chip shop and put, some people had fur coats in them days, real fur coats, and put their fur coats in the fish shop into the oil to spoil them all. Broke their windows and things like that. Even in Ashington, I had an auntie in Ashington. There was a butcher's shop, it was German, a German butcher, and we used to buy pork sandwiches from them. He had all his windows broken as well.

S: What about your shop?

G: Never did that to us, mind. [...] Because we have been here a lot of years and we had never been in trouble, or things like that, the police were marvelous. The local bobby here, God rest him now wherever he is, he was very good. [...] They were absolutely fabulous. [...] We were abiding people as well, but a lot of people didn't start to come back into the shop, you know, they weren't coming in, so the takings were going down as well, you know, the sweets were sticking to the jars, cigarettes on the shelf, nobody was coming in to buy.'

(Mrs. G. March, 2016)

Mrs G. referred to the Second World War as a moment of rupture in the harmonious relationship between her family and the local community. She reminisced about the shops that were vandalized (not only Italian shops), in the neighbourhood and social networks. Despite the fact that localised incidences of verbal and physical abuse were not always experienced in the first person, the events she mentioned had profoundly shaped her presence within the social context, since she perceived her family as being treated differently following the outbreak of the war. Therefore, her sense of 'social insideness' (Rowles, 1983), -as illustrated in Chapter 2, 4, and 6- had been disrupted by sudden transformation of a cherished place. Thus, this participant interpreted the boycotting of her family Italian business ('some people didn't like us anymore'; 'nobody was coming in to buy'), as a way of ostracising her family within their own community. As shown by this example, the use of the verbs 'coming' and 'going' ('*coming* on to the English side' and '*going* on to the German side') reveals

how Mrs G. underlined the centrality of Britishness within the construction of her personal identity. However, the anti-Italian feeling experienced at a younger age influenced the way this participant and her family thought they were regarded. Hence, both examples reported above show the impact of the xenophobic riots on the sense of being and belonging amongst British-born citizens of Italian background within their own communities. To support this argument further, I report another example.

The following conversation extract derives from an interview with the two sisters Angela and Rosalinda, introduced in Chapter 5. Angela and Rosalinda defined themselves as Anglo-Italian, given the fact that their father went through the process of naturalization.<sup>61</sup> However, during the course of the interview, when reminiscing about their childhood and the days spent in their grandparents' shop during wartime, they said:

R: Yes. Yes. When, when Italy went allies with the Germans, my mother had a shop, an ice-cream parlour

A: Oh, I told her that, yes. Hmm.

R: On the street further down, and the English broke all the windows in the shop. Even though my dad was in the English Army.'

(Angela and Rosalinda, November, 2015)

This example suggests that the family's attempt to belong to a wider 'national community' through citizenship and service in the British Army was doomed to failure. Hence, serving in the British army is a powerfully symbolic representation of the self which is in contrast with the label of 'enemy alien'. However, even though their father demonstrated his loyalty to Britain by enlisting in the British Army, their shop was vandalised. Hence, Rosalinda referred to 'the English' who damaged the windows of their Italian shop, showing how this event might have forged and challenged categories of 'us' and 'them' regarding a sense of national identity. These three examples reported so far demonstrated how this group of people have experienced not only a sudden transformation of valued places, but a loss of self-identification with these. Nonetheless, the sense of attachment to places is revealed by the association and affiliation with these, through historical evidence of their

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<sup>61</sup> Naturalization: the admittance of a foreigner to the citizenship of a country through formal practices of belonging.



presence in places. This might be interpreted with the historical dimension of place attachment as articulated by Burholt (2006). Her work explains how participants provide evidence of their autobiography embedded in place (i.e. being born and bred in the area). Similarly, the three examples reported above, with family histories of business located in the locality. Despite so, in addition to xenophobic riots, a sense of marginalization amongst Anglo-Italians became more explicit with the politics of internment and relocation (Ugolini, 2011). I address these themes in the section that follows.

### *7.2.2 Internment and feeling like an 'enemy within'*

One example of research participants' reminiscences about the internment of their relatives is that of Mrs. G., who recalled when her father was deported:

'G: The government said that all the Italians that weren't nationalized, my father wasn't, we'd all have to be collected and sent to a camp. So, all the Italians were sent away, we were all British-born and the sergeant and policeman came into our house and they said, to my mother, "I'm afraid that, we've had notification to say from the government that Mr. (name) has got to go to a camp" because we were near the coast you see and we didn't know whether we were going to get invaded, or whether we would want to help to do anything, you know, (Laughter), God forbid, but anyhow, the door wasn't locked they said [...] "Just come over when you're ready, you know, there's no hurry." [...] So all the Italians were collected and they were taken to Newcastle. Some had to go to Canada. You had a choice – you could either go to Canada or the Isle of Man. Well, my mother was devastated, you know, we were all crying, all crying. (Participant cries) We had a good reputation, we were *brava gente*, the only fault was that my father was born in Italy. [...] Well we were all devastated. [...] So anyhow my father had to go away, well you can imagine how we cried.

S: How old were you at that time?

G: That was... I was nine years old.'

(Mrs. G. March, 2016)

In this extract it is important to notice that Mrs G. broke down in tears when narrating the traumatic event of her father's deportation. This showed how the relevance of what she had experienced as an injustice in younger age was still vivid in her memory in later life. Similarly, Ugolini (2011) reported memories of Italian-Scottish children who had witnessed their parents being removed from home by the police, and that these memories, recalled and interpreted retrospectively, are still a cause of psychological distress. Ugolini (2011) illustrated how research participants who had experienced wartime deportation might express anxiety and a fear of still being identified as an 'enemy alien', expressed through the request for anonymity, privacy and confidentiality<sup>62</sup> – such as the case of Mrs G., during our research encounter. Mrs G. defined her family identity using the expression 'brava gente' (good people), and she declared the innocence of her father and injustice of the internment that 'perpetuates the historical innocence of Italians' in the UK (Ugolini, 2011, p. 233).<sup>63</sup> However, although identifying herself as British ('we were all British-born'), her memory of the childhood trauma she experienced due to her father's deportation from her house generated doubts about it. Therefore, this example raises questions that intersect with the subjective construction of the national identity and the negotiation of belonging to places, showing how the experience of internment might have redefined the boundaries between national categories of 'us' and 'them'.

Similarly, this experience emerged from the interview with Christine, already introduced in Chapter 5. When talking about xenophobic riots experienced by her grandparents, Salvatore and Marta, Christine commented:

'I don't think lots happened in Jarrow. But, I have got a letter here, written in 1939, me grandma and granddad went to Italy during the war, accidentally, since me granddad wanted to see the feast of the Virgin Mary<sup>64</sup> so they went in August. But when they were in Italy the war broke out, so they were stuck there for five years. But some people were a bit nasty to me, me mam, afterwards, they said "Oh yes, your parents were

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62 During my data collection, I was told stories about English-born children of Italian people, who, during the War, were relocated to Italy for protection. These people remember the traumatic experience of being detached from their parents, and hosted by local Catholic associations. They were strictly told to avoid speaking in Italian under any circumstances: 'it was very dangerous', they commented. Some of these did not agree to participate in my research, and were unwilling for their story to be audio-recorded. For ethical reasons, I didn't press these further to take part in my research. In one case, an informant of these reported of not being comfortable in showing language proficiencies in Italian in public, that I could witness in many occasions, in more intimate contexts.

63 For the political use of the expression, 'Italians good people', see also Ugolini (2011).

64 Local folklore and religious festival, as mentioned in Chapter 5.

interned. Your parents were not only on holiday, they were being kept.” Me mum said “Oh no, definitely not.’

(Christine, Jarrow, February, 2016)

This extract of conversation shows that the absence of Christine’s grandparents from Jarrow raised suspicions amongst the local community and was interpreted as internment with no relationship to the real facts.<sup>65</sup> As Christine said, during the research encounter, her family might have used strategic ‘tangible proof’, such as a letter sent from her grandparents from Italy, to avoid being labelled as prisoners of war within their local community. Therefore, this example demonstrates how the discourse around ‘Italians as enemy aliens’, and the politics of internment, governed people’s way of thinking, speaking and producing knowledge about this group of people.

The data presented so far reports participants’ memories and interpretation of the socio-cultural and political context in Newcastle and its surrounding areas during the Second World War. As illustrated by the examples above, touching upon themes of wartime physical and verbal aggression, participants expanded upon their sense of identity. These examples confirm studies on British Italian history (Colpi, 1992; Sponza, 1992; Fortier, 2000; Sponza, 2000; Ugolini, 2011; Shankland, 2014), which reported how the outbreak of the Second World War undermined the sense of personal identity of the British-born citizen with an Italian background in the UK. In particular, Colpi (1991) highlighted that the war rhetoric of anti-Italian feeling was responsible for fostering a sense of difference amongst British-born citizens of Italian origin. As also illustrated by Sponza (2000), the sense of difference embodied in autobiographies of second-generation Italians growing up in the UK, in the interwar period, focused on verbal insults, ranging from conventional expressions to negative connotations of Italians. Similarly, Ugolini (2011), who has provided the main guiding historical articulation in this chapter, in her monograph on the Italian population during the Second World War, analysed the experiences of second-generation Italians in southeast Scotland through personal testimonies in conjunction with archival records. Ugolini (2011) acknowledged that the war rhetoric of anti-Italian feeling

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65 Several participants informed me about the existence of particular definitions to refer to Italians negatively: such as “POW” or “WOP”. These expressions recall the war time rhetoric of Italians as “Prisoners of War”, as criminals.

‘made visible by localised incidences of verbal and physical abuse, although “constructed in a backdrop of antipathy and embraced within pre-existent antagonism and marginalization’ (Ugolini, 2011, p. 31)

influenced a sense of “not-belonging” on a national level amongst Italians of second generation at a time of conflict. Ugolini (2011) draws on both Sponza (2000) and Colpi (1991), stating that the impact of the xenophobic riots on this group of people’s sense of being and belonging has been downplayed. On the contrary, the author concluded that a personal sense of identity amongst second-generation Italians might have been shaped and re-shaped by experiences of anti-Italian feeling during their younger years (Ugolini, 2011). Her argument pertains to the concept of identity of the Italian population in the UK that was subject to contestation, raising questions of inclusion and exclusion regarding the wartime rhetoric of national unity: the British government’s definition of some groups of people (Italian, as well as German, and Austrian) as the ‘Enemy Within’ had an influence on the ‘notion of who is entitled to be part of a national community’ (Ugolini, 2011, p. 2).

Therefore, in line with this literature (Colpi, 1992; Sponza, 1992; Fortier, 2000; Sponza, 2000; Ugolini, 2011; Shankland, 2014), the examples reported illustrate how xenophobic riots challenged national belonging and sense of citizenship, fostering a sense of difference amongst British citizens of Italian background. The data reported in this section confirmed that the anti-Italian feeling erupted with the outbreak of the war in Newcastle and surrounding areas, and played a crucial role in marginalizing these people from the communities in which they were born, and contributed to a wider sense of ‘not-belonging’ to a national identity. Thus, these data are important, firstly, in providing evidence based on how the sense of difference or exclusion might contribute to articulation on identity and belonging; secondly, in revealing the complexity around the definition of subjective identification with places inhabited; thirdly, in showing how this sense of difference heighten a sense of collective belonging amongst Italians in the UK, in the particular historical context of the Second World War.

Furthermore, these data mirror the work of Degnen (2005) who highlighted the importance of social memory practices. Drawing on ethnographic research in Dodworth, a former coalfield in South Yorkshire, she shows how people become linked through groups during memory talk. On this note, Degnen (2016) illustrated the concatenation between social memory, embodied subjectivity and everyday

experiences of places, highlighting the importance of place attachment in later life. Degnen (2016) showed how place attachment is manifested in action and is embodied in the sense of a participant, who, 'in recounting this story, (...) performs and demonstrates a deep, temporally rich connection to the hill, the road, the houses, and the people who had lived there' (Degnen, 2016, p. 1658). Hence, during the course of her fieldwork, she highlighted embodied knowledge learned by her participants' memories that shaped her daily experiences of navigating through them. Her fieldwork is similar to the examples provided by the participants of my study, who in the act of recalling their family member's story, socialize these places with me. In this regard, Degnen (2016) argued that the significance of social and collective bonds via places is also given by their influence on sense of belonging and identity, forging a process of exclusion for the ones who do 'not belong'. Hence, the act of socializing place attachment, according to Degnen's notion of it, shapes a sense of identity and belonging. Degnen (2016) shows how social memory and "place works not only just to tie people to places as *individuals* (...), but that it also works to tie individuals to each other" (Degnen, 2016, p. 1649).

To explore this aspect further, it is worth questioning how some of these people negotiated their self-definition of national belonging, embodying a feeling of marginality and exclusion within their local communities at the individual and collective level. Therefore, in the section that follows I will show how the anti-Italian feeling experienced contributed to the constitution of a communal sense of belonging to the ethnic Italian identity amongst British citizens of Italian origin.

### **7.3 Degree of Visibility: Hiding Italian Identity and a Heightened Sense of Belonging**

In the previous section, participants narrated that the period of the Second World War was characterized by the government-state policy of 'enemy aliens' towards Italians living in the UK, and that the consequent anti-Italian feeling which erupted amongst the local population was made visible by xenophobic riots and verbal abuses. Participants reported that in those years 'it was not sensible to be Italian' (Alfredo, July, 2015). In this section, I will expand on how the everyday expressions of cultural identity intersect with the use of places as accordingly adapted between private and public places amongst this group of people.

### *7.3.1 The process of “de-Italianisation” amongst third generation Italians*

During the interview, Alfredo indicated that his name could be a principal symbol of national belonging. He justified this statement by illustrating that the ‘Alfredo’ name, in his family, is significant as it was passed on between generations. Touching upon this theme, he pointed to some photographs of his forebears who had migrated from Italy (grandfather, great grandfather and so on), which were displayed in the corridor of his house. However, his family tradition risked being interrupted during the wartime. Hence, Alfredo revealed that one of his concerns, during his younger years, was that his Italian name was problematic in the social and historical context. His name revealed to others that he had a different cultural background associated with negative stereotypes. Here, I quote his words:

‘P: So as my name is Alfredo, and now Alfredo, well the name is Ok, people say ‘nice name’, but in 1944-45 this was a very strange name, very strange name and people were suspicious [...] so all of my family, my father fought for the British, and he was called Alfredo, but when he came back during the war, he called himself Alfie. Changed to Alfie, which was the English version, and no one ever called him Alfredo. I always called myself Alfredo, and you know, I don’t know why but I have never. I didn’t like Alfie, or Alf, Alfred, I didn’t like those names, er I like my name, so everybody who knows me calls me Alfredo, but it was difficult at the beginning, at the time.’

(Alfredo, July 2015)

Some Italian names were anglicized, given the process of naturalization, as happened to the participant’s father. However, his father had had to ‘de-Italianize’ his name, due to being enlisted in the British Army. The participant had not wanted to do so. This narrative contextualizes the importance of the inherited name for a personal sense of identity and belonging, shedding light on the relationship between the process of ‘de-Italianisation’ and a personal sense of attachment towards the family’s cultural identity amongst some third-generation Italians.

Similarly, when I interviewed Angela and Rosalinda, they showed me the genealogy tree of their family. Hence, Rosalinda is interested in genealogy and gathered all the information from the village from which their grandparents firstly migrated to the UK

at the beginning of the century. Thanks to this document, they brought my attention to how their relatives' names had been changed to English versions.

'R: That's my grandfather, he was called Vincenzo Reale, and he's changed his name to Jimmy Riley.

A: To be like English.

R: English names, Jimmy Riley. [...] Well, my mother was called Assunta, but she used to get called Sadie.

A: Cindy. Cindy.

R: Cindy or Sadie.'

(Angela and Rosalinda<sup>66</sup>, November, 2015)

When I asked the reasons why the Italian names were anglicised, they explained to me that this was to reduce the chance of experiencing discrimination. To add more evidence of how the socio-cultural context influenced the expression of Italian identity, the two sisters stated that their relatives avoided the use of Italian in public places.

'R: You couldn't speak Italian. You weren't, if you spoke Italian it was dangerous.

A: No, that's why we don't speak Italian.

S: No?

R: They never spoke it to us at all, you know.

A: They never spoke Italian because they didn't dare speak Italian.

R: Yeah. You couldn't. You couldn't speak Italian any more.

A: 'Cause they were hated. If they spoke Italian they were hated.'

(Angela and Rosalinda, November, 2015)

Rosalinda and Angela associated the Italian identity of their grandparents with their mother tongue and their names, commenting on how the war-time rhetoric of anti-

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<sup>66</sup> In this section, it is important to note the significance of participants' names. As explained in Chapter 3, for ethical reasons, all participants' names are substituted by a pseudonym, unless, participants declared otherwise. In these cases, participants wanted to use their real names, having Italian names. This is itself a symbol of the social-cultural change that took place during recent years, where Italians in England no longer feel the need to hide their cultural identity.

Italian feeling contributed to the change in names and the withdrawal from the Italian language in public environments. They also associated the reason why their Italian relatives never taught them Italian to the long-term consequence of not being free to speak the native language openly. This example illustrates how some aspects of the Italian cultural identity were adapted to the socio-cultural context amongst this group of people during the time of the Second World War - Italian names were anglicised, and the Italian language was avoided in public places - and that this process of 'Anglicization' was necessary to survive.

These findings evoke the studies of Colpi (1992) and Fortier (2000), who described the process of 'de-Italianization' amongst Italians in the UK and their families as being to assume a condition of invisibility. These scholars claimed that the condition of invisibility was due to the violence encountered during the Second World War context. In particular, Colpi (1992) wrote that: 'it was in this historical context that a generation of British-Italians learned that it was not a good thing to be Italian and how it was better to de-Italianize themselves' (Colpi, 1992, p. 111). Colpi also illustrated that, given the negative stereotypes associated with the Italians as 'enemy aliens' in the UK, as experienced by Italians during the Second World War period, this group of people assimilated into British society to 'camouflage' their identity. In this respect, Fortier (2000) highlighted how Italian migrants in the UK tended to hide their Italianness, 'avoiding speaking Italian in public, anglicising their names, or their trade' (Fortier, 2000, p. 23), to guard against the tangible threat of discrimination and violence. Therefore, the findings accord with the previous literature, which has framed Italians in the UK as 'invisible migrants' (Fortier, 2000, p. 23). This expression refers to the invisibility of Italian migrants in a British multi-ethnic society as a product of their integration and acceptance within the communities. However if, on the one hand, the consequences of invisibility might be due to cultural assimilation (Fortier, 2000, p. 72), in this particular case it was a result of violence. To explore this theme further, in the next section, I progress considering the degree of visibility of cultural belonging in terms of the relationship with places during the historical period under investigation.

### *7.3.2 Places and identity: indoor vs. outdoor*

Whilst, in Chapter 5, I provided a more detailed exploration of embodied practices within the private dwelling and materiality of domestic possession, to re-create a 'sense of home' amongst an Italian migrant population, the major point of interest of



the following extracts of conversation lies in the restriction of the expression of the cultural identity related to the private domain ('only in the house').

During the course of the interview, Angela and Rosalinda, in reminiscing about their childhood, said that they used to spend most of the afternoons after school in the Italian coffee shop or in the ice-cream factory owned by their grandfather. Nonetheless, they never heard their relatives speaking Italian in those places. The two sisters informed me that whilst some markers of their Italian identity were avoided in public places (names, Italian language), Italian cultural identity was expressed in the domestic sphere. They illustrated what happened in their home when their mother interacted with her father, their grandfather:

'R: She said when she used to speak to her dad, he always used to speak to her in Italian. And if she answered back in English, he would slap her across the face. She had to answer in Italian, not English.

S: Within the house, maybe

A: Oh yes, in the house.

R: In the house. Oh, in the house, only in the house.

A: Only in the house.'

(Angela and Rosalinda, November, 2015)

Emphasizing the role of language as a conveyor of cultural belonging, this extract of conversation shows that being within the home influenced the family's expression of national identity. On the one hand, Italians were encouraged to hide their national belonging in the outdoor environments, for the socio-cultural context they experienced. On the other hand, the family setting within the domestic sphere was an expressive site for the transmission and preservation of cultural identity. Therefore, this example shows how participants negotiated their sense of identity, by linking it to the concept of place. This has also been confirmed by others, for example Mrs. G. Our research encounter took place in her house, in the presence of her niece, Maria,<sup>67</sup> a third generation Italian, in her sixties. Mrs G said that:

'G: In the house we spoke Italian all the time, you know.

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<sup>67</sup> Although the participant here gave her consent to declare her identity, a pseudonym is used here to protect Mrs G.'s request for privacy and confidentiality.

S: In the house and not outside?

G: No, outside. I was always English, but in the house, erm, with my parents we spoke all Italian.

M: You only spoke Italian in[side], but fuori<sup>68</sup> was English.

S: Why?

G: Well you, you couldn't do it. You, you, you were uncomfortable, because as long as they know...

M: It's not like today where you hear all nationalities on the train, not in them days.'

(Mrs. G., March 2016)

Maria agreed with her auntie in saying Italians had a sort of dual identity: they were Italian in the indoor space and English in the outdoor. Hence, drawing on these data, I argue that the relationship these people established with places in their everyday life, in that historical context, influenced the way they perceived their cultural identity. The Italian origin needed to be hidden or confined to the domestic private sphere, whilst it was appropriate to be English outdoors in the public sphere. The best example that can support this argument is how Alfredo continued his narrative, revealing the importance of the visibility/invisibility of the cultural identity in public or private places. In remembering that he spent his childhood with his family in the grandparents' house, he described an everyday life 'behavioural rule' that he learned from his granddad:

'A: So [my grandfather] used to say, well we lived in our house, in grandfather's house, it was an Italian house, so we ate *pasta asciutta*, or Italian food, we drunk wine with the meal, and my grandparents spoke Italian. So it was an Italian house! But he always used to say that this is our house and we are Italian, but when we leave this, when you walk out the door you are English! "You speak English! You don't act strangely, and you do what the English do!" You eat English food, you take English tea, 'speak English! ((imitating voice)) and keep your nose down, right?"

S: What does it mean 'keep your nose down'?

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<sup>68</sup> The Italian term 'fuori' means 'outside' in English.

A: 'Keep your nose down' just keep quiet, don't cause any trouble [...] so that was our motto! Inside the house we were Italian, outside not.'

(Alfredo, July 2015)

This extract of conversation shows how Alfredo interpreted the sense of belonging to a national identity through everyday practices in the domestic sphere (language, food, drinks). Hence, Alfredo defines the 'Italian home' through habits that marked a cultural belonging. He stated that only when they were indoors did his family members use the Italian language and Italian customs. However, his Italian grandfather recommended him to quickly learn to behave like 'the natives' outside the home, where he needed to act as an English person, changing his cultural preferences in terms of eating and drinking ('English food, English tea') and language in communicating with others ('speak English'). Alfredo reminisced about his grandfather encouraging him to assimilate into the mainstream society, rendering invisible his cultural roots. As an example of this, the expression 'Keep your nose down' is the most powerful statement in Alfredo's last extract, and it required giving an explanation to me as to what this actually meant. Alfredo explained that his grandfather advised him to occupy the margin, to avoid being noticed, to be humble, reserved and avoid getting into trouble. In other words, being and 'becoming' something different. Thus, the major point of interest of the following extracts of conversation lies in the restriction of the expression of the cultural identity related to the private domain ("only in the house").

As such, this example is to be contextualized within the narration of how these people grew up with the 'compulsory aspect' to express different cultural identities in different places. These findings illustrate that the boundaries between public and private spheres were very strictly adhered to at the time; the threshold between indoor and outdoor was distinctly marked, influencing sense of identity. Being inside the home meant to be in 'a place where Italians could be themselves'; while being out meant pretending to be English. From these data, according to some participants' perspective, it seems clear that this group of people has internalized this gaze, monitored their own behavior, and expressed different cultural identity according to circumstances and places in the private or public sphere.<sup>69</sup>

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69 The French philosopher Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), illustrated the experience of people according to the degree of visibility. This was made possible through a place, the Panopticon, a concentric prison, characterized by the possibility of observing people who inhabit it at all times. Peters, J.D. (1997) 'Seeing bifocally: Media, place, culture', *Culture, power, place: Explorations in critical anthropology*. pp. 75-92.. drawing on this metaphor of place, explore the concept of the public sphere

As the examples show, these experiences, as embodied and projected within the family setting, reveal that the visibility of a cultural belonging matters, and has to be appropriately used according to places. The dualism between indoor vs. outdoor, and Italian vs. English is important in relation to the identity and place, and requires an explanation about the meanings of places and the contextualization of them in the social historical context. In line with this, the data are important in highlighting how the historical construction of the Italian diasporic identity shaped sense of identification and belonging to a migrant population in relation to places (private and public sphere).

As we have seen with the example of Lucia and other participants in Chapter 5, these data help to explain better the extent to which the physical aspect of the environment played a key role in the construction of identity among older migrants. These findings add to the previous discussion how also for the second (and third) generation Italian migrants the home conveyed a special meaning because of the experiences of been 'othered' outside.

In the previous section, I established that participants expanded upon their sense of identity, emphasizing the idea of themselves as outsiders in the communities where they grew up and recalling wartime physical or verbal aggression. These last extracts of conversations add to the previous argument that the impact of these historical events shape participants' relationship with the places they inhabited, both in public and private domains. Hence, the traumatic memories of the war (or post-memories) are still part of everyday life discourse as associated with places. Hence, these places, linked to the war time rhetoric, are important in locating social memories among this group of people,<sup>70</sup> symbolizing embodied time, shared histories, trauma and emotions. Thus, these data show how the feeling of marginalization within their own communities, during the time of conflict, is still part of everyday life discourse amongst this population, and is deeply embedded in the places they still inhabit.

### *7.3.3 Discrimination in the public sphere*

To illustrate further the impact of anti-Italian feeling, I suggest exploring how these people constructed meanings of self-representation concerning the sense of

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(die Öffentlichkeit). He argues that inhabitants who think they are acting under the public gaze, internalize this gaze and become guardian of their own behaviour.

<sup>70</sup> I was told about the condition of the Prisoner of War Camp's experiences. In particular, some informants expanded upon this theme related to a particular camp, built and occupied by Italians. At the time of the interview, some continued to feel attached to these places and used them as a vehicle for national pride, or as significant places from which to start to narrate their family history. Similarly, I have assisted many times in the commemoration of the tragic event of The Arandora Star.

belonging to an Italian identity. To do this, I will return to the example of Mrs. G., who experienced her relatives' deportation and enforced relocation. I have selected only this example, amongst others in the bigger data set, because of the clear emotional response to these events, which still caused psychological distress in later life, as I said above. In the following extract of conversation, the narrative begins with contextualizing her mother and herself in the experience of women's relocation far from the coast, to continue by reporting the experience of her sister left alone in the hometown. Here, I quote her words:

'G: The police came back to our home and said, "we've had a call from the government again that all alien women have got to go 50 miles away from the coast." But not, not in concentration camps. They had to go with other relations further inland. [...] We stayed in Carlisle. And I used to go to school in Carlisle. [...] I was only 10 years old and I wanted to go with my mummy you see. [...] But Rosie was here by herself, my sister. [...] She was now 26 or 29 years old, but mind the police were good to her. I must, must say the police used to check her all the time, make sure she was all right. And then Mr. C., the local Bobby, constable used to go in and say, "Rosie don't you worry, I'm watching over you", used to always say to her. [...] It was very hard because nobody was coming into the shop and when the air raids were on, he used to say, "Rosie, are you awake. Come, go into the shelter." Used to have the shelter in the front of the shop. If you come out of this house now and you just go further along, there used to be a public shelter there, right down underneath the ground. So Mr C. the policeman this one night said to Rosie, "Where were you Rosie? Why don't you come to the public shelter?" And she said, "I'm Italian, if I came to the public shelter nobody would sit beside me." And Mr C. said, "I would sit beside you my darling." I always remember those words. Oh the, the police were marvellous, they were marvellous they really were. [...] But no, nobody bothered her, nobody.'

(Mrs G., March 2016)

Through this example, Mrs G. emphasised both the solidarity of the local population and the discrimination perceived by narrating her sister's experience. On the one hand, Mrs G. recalls the human solidarity expressed by the figure of the police officer – emblematic in this narration, since it represents the British government. On the

other hand, her sister is described as not a victim of violence, but perceived herself as unwelcome in the public shelter, given her family's nationality. This example shed light on the impact of the historical context on participants' relationship with public places. Hence, the public shelter, as a place through which this narrative is contextualized, is a powerful metaphorical tool to convey the precariousness of these human beings in cases of conflict. It is supposed to be a place that provides protection, but it was perceived by the participants' sister as inaccessible, given her presumed diversity. Being born in the UK, the participant remembered how her sister risked her own life given the label and stereotype attached to her sense of 'Italianness' as constructed in her social and cultural context.

There are three main points that I would like to explore from these examples: the meanings of places as activating social memories; the impact of trauma and memories in an aging migrant population; and how the meanings attributed to these experiences of marginalization might have contributed to the creation of a communal identity.

Firstly, these narratives are located in places inhabited. The public shelter Mrs G. talked about was located in a specific place, in front of the house where the interview took place. As mentioned before, this refers to the same house where Mrs G. and her sister were born in 1930, and where their grandparents had lived since they migrated to the UK at the beginning of the century. This public shelter was not visible at the time of the research, but Mrs. G. pointed with her finger, and imagined that I could also see what she was going to say. This reveals how this place and this narrative are still part of Mrs G.'s memory, many years later. Therefore, some places can be interpreted as 'place-memory', or according to Casey's conceptualization of it

'the ability of place to make the past come to life in the present and thus contribute to the production and reproduction of social memory' (Casey, 1987, p. 87).

Consequently, this example, (Mrs G. "If you come out of *this house* now and *you just go further along*, there used to be a public shelter there, *right down* underneath the ground") in conversation with all the previous reported in this chapter (Angela and Rosalinda: "my mother had a shop, on the street further down"; Alfredo: "in my grandfather house", just to mention few) illustrates how these places activate social memories, on an individual and collective level. These social memories shape and

forge people's narrations of the history they represent. Thus, having illustrated how these places activate social memories, these data show how the feeling of marginalization within their own communities, during the time of conflict, is still part of everyday life discourses amongst this population, being so embedded in places that they still inhabit. In this respect, social memories can explain how people become linked to each other (Degnen, 2005) and how attachment to places can be highly social and collective (Degnen, 2016).

Secondly, these places activate traumatic memories. Hence, to better understand these examples, I suggest considering the concept of 'overwhelming inherited memory' as theorized by Hirsch (2008) in an aging migrant population. Works on memory and trauma have pointed to the inter- and trans-generational act of the transfer of knowledge of experiences. The scholar relied on the concept of 'post-memory' to describe the relationship of the second generation to the powerful, painful and traumatic experiences of those who came before. Although she adopted the Holocaust as the historical frame of reference, she reflected on how some events that had happened in the past still have their effects in the present. This is due to the fact that these events:

'were transmitted to them so deeply and effectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right' (Hirsch, 2008, p. 107).

This seems to be the case with Mrs G. in this extract of conversation. In recalling her sister's memories, more than 70 years before the time of the interview, Mrs G. offered insight into the traumatic memories in an aging population considered 'other' during conflicts, and into the subjective interpretation of these events that cause her suffering in later life. These reported data show how the experiences of anti-Italian feeling were made visible and were relevant to the concept of 'Italianness' in the everyday classification of the self, embodying also the negative wartime discourses attached to it.

Thirdly, these narratives constitute a terrain of belonging and shape barriers to place identity. These findings are in line with the view of Fortier (2000), stating that the war 'constitutes a terrain of belonging and played a role in the construction of a communal identity' (Fortier, 2000, p. 64); and with Ugolini (2011)'s argument that the negotiation of the national imaginary rhetoric of 'we' and 'them', during the time of

conflict, contributed to the Italian families' sense of 'not-belonging' to a British unitary identity, and heightened an Italian sense of identity. She argued that:

'far from suppressing a sense of Italian identity, as Colpi asserted, the War often instilled a deep sense of self-identification amongst the second generation of themselves Italian' (Ugolini, 2011, p. 4).

In line with this literature also these findings have shown these participants had strengthened their attachment to the Italian identity, due to the sense of belonging to an imagined community' (Anderson, 1991). This was a theme already touched at the beginning of this dissertation, in Chapter 4. Therefore, I suggest that these findings might be interpreted in conversation with the examples of those (second generation Italians) who revealed difficulties in clearly stating their negotiation of belonging to a national identity. That is to say, that the process of 'othering identities', as we learned in this chapter, might have influenced the construction of a sense of identity as reported in Chapter 4.

In this respect, these findings have shown how social memories, and people's histories associated with them, can open new debates over experiences of place and ageing, fostering both place attachment and a sense of identity and belonging in later life. Drawing on this contribution, I argue that the impact of the 'anti-Italian feeling' perceived and embodied by participants in those years influenced their sense of belonging and attachment to people and place. Therefore, looking at the literature in social gerontology on ageing migrants (Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015) these data can also offer an insight into the concept of ethnicity and the way it is articulated in a migrant population at the time of conflict. The data reported have shown how experiences of anti-Italian feeling made visible and relevant the concept of 'Italianness' in the everyday classification of the self. Thus, the examples provided offer evidence of how attachment to an ethnic identity has been constituted among British citizens of Italian background.

#### **7.4 Anti-Italian Feeling after the War (1950s to 1970s)**

In the previous two sections of this chapter, I illustrated the perspectives of third generation migrants who experienced 'anti-Italian feeling' during the years of the Second World War. In this section, I will describe how these prejudices asserted their presence amongst Italian migrants in Newcastle for much longer than the actual years of the conflict. I will show how the wartime rhetoric of 'anti-Italian' feeling also



influenced those who had no personal experience of the same historical period, but were informed about it. I will focus on the way this has passed on through further migrant generations. The data that follow represent the viewpoints of first-generation Italian migrants who moved to the North East after the Second World War. I adopt Hirsh's concept of post-memory (Hirsch, 2008)<sup>71</sup>, explained above, to refer to how traumatic memories have been passed on to the next generation of migrants.

#### *7.4.1 "How can you blame them?"*

Italian migrants who moved to the UK in the years after the Second World War, whether they experienced discrimination directly or not, have been informed about the way Italians were regarded. As explained in Chapter 6, these post war ageing migrants required a work permit to migrate from Italy to the UK. This work permit implied that there was a job vacancy offered by a family or a business looking for a foreign worker. Therefore, it was common to have close contacts with long-time residents of Italian origins who provided a sort of 'induction' for the newcomers. Hence, I argue here that an important role in the exchange of information and the reiteration of negative stereotypes towards Italians was played in this sense by chain migration relationships, as is demonstrated in Lucia's example, a participant already introduced in Chapter 4:

'L: When we came over they didn't like Italians. It was not long then the War had ended, there were lots of prejudices towards us. The people I used to work for, told me that...well, they were here since long time. She was an older lady, when I was 20 years old, and she told me that, when they finished working in their fish and chip shop, they used to carry the full hot pan when going out of the shop to go home.

S: Really?

L: Yes! They needed it to defend themselves, because when they were out of the shop there were English people waiting for them to fight. If you could have seen the violence before, Simona, it was not like now.

S: Did it happen to you, too?

L: No. They used to call us as "Talian" or "Garlic Talian". We were called like this because of the smell of garlic we ate. Well, you felt like a

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<sup>71</sup> I adopt this concept to explain the intra-generational relationship, referring to generations of migrants regardless of the family bonds between them.

foreigner. Now, not anymore. English are gentlemen. Now it has changed because the generation has changed. People travelled more. [...] Maybe, it was due to ignorance. However, sometimes you don't have to judge people, you have to see the circumstances. I think that none of the ordinary people wanted the War. The conflicts are only desired by people in power.'

(Lucia, translated into English, October, 2015)

This example reveals how the perception of Italians in the UK has changed over time, and has been shaped by oral histories, passed by the 'old' to the 'new' generation of migrants. Mrs. Lucia was informed by the attitudes of Italian migrants that she encountered at the beginning of her experience of migration, and this shaped her feeling of being 'othered' in that particular historical period. This introduces another aspect to be considered: Lucia identified xenophobia towards every minority group within a specific historical period, identifying a 'before' and 'then', which refers to the current situation<sup>72</sup>. The comparison between the past (discrimination) and the present (tolerance) is given by the meanings ascribed to, and the acceptance of people's diversity. Nowadays, Mrs. Lucia told me, it is normal to come from a different place, but before it was not. However, at the time of the interview, in her everyday life, she still expressed her Italian identity indoors by speaking Italian.<sup>73</sup> This might be interpreted as knowledge about the way Italians were regarded, as learned in the early stages of migration, which still influenced her practices in later life.

Other participants confirmed that they had learned the same version of history during the early stages of migration. For example, Armando, a participant already introduced in Chapter 5. At the time of the interview, he was in his seventies, and was retired; his family runs a restaurant on the coast. The interview with Armando took place on the second floor of his restaurant in a staff room not accessible to the public, where Armando spends most of his time.

'A: Before it was different. It's not like today, before you were really a migrant.

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<sup>72</sup> My reader should note that, for this and the following participants' perspective, the reference to the 'before' and 'then' is no longer the outbreak of the Second World War, as for the first and second sections of the chapter, but the 1970s.

<sup>73</sup> I reported in Chapter 5 how Lucia, and her family, still identify the 'threshold' of her house as a national border. speaking Italian when indoors.

S: What do you mean?

A: It was different, being an Italian now was not like in the past. Now if you go downstairs<sup>74</sup> and you say “I’m Italian!” “So what?” and another will say “I come from Colombia!” “Well, it’s not a problem!” “I come from Zimbabwe!” That’s all right! You don’t take any notice, do you understand?

S: You mean that there is tolerance nowadays. While before?

A: Yes. While before, not. Well, the War, it was not so long that the War ended. There were a lot of people who suffered here, you know. There was resentment, among the population, of course. How could you blame them?’

(Armando, Translated into English, October, 2015)

Armando justifies the resentment among the local population towards the Italians in Newcastle, saying that the ‘native’ people suffered because of the War. He understands and tolerates the different points of view and the reasons for discrimination towards Italians. Nonetheless, in the early stages of migration, in the 1970s, this anti-Italian feeling influenced him in the form of ‘camouflaging’ (Colpi, 1992; Fortier, 2000) his national belonging, just as the previous generation of migrants did. Thus, Armando discussed his choice of name for his ice-cream company:

‘A: When I decided to run my own activity, I needed to decide a name for it. So the first day I went out with my van, I didn’t have a name for it. It was 11 p.m. and one little boy, maybe 7 years old, so cute, he approached my van to buy an ice-cream. He asked me: “what’s your name?” I couldn’t say my Italian name, at the time Italians here were not appreciated. If you were a foreigner, especially an Italian, [laughs], the parents would never let a child buy an ice-cream from you. So I said: “What’s your name?” He said: “My name is Elvis!” So I said: “Really? So is mine!” He was so happy and he screamed: “His name is Elvis, like me!” From that day I called myself Sir Elvis,<sup>75</sup> and it is still the name of my van.’

(Armando, Translated into English, October, 2015)

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<sup>74</sup> With this term, the participant refers to the ground floor of the restaurant, accessible to the public.

<sup>75</sup> A pseudonym is used in this case to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participant.

This example shows how the strategies to integrate into the new receiving society and avoid discrimination were also adopted from the first-generation migrant's perspective several years after the conflict. The example of Armando shows how he anglicized the name for his business to 'pretend' to be English, like the Italian migrants illustrated in the section above.

#### *7.4.2 Disengagement and socialization*

The following is an additional example of how the narrative related to the Italian as an enemy alien shaped Italian migrants' agency in socialization. Luigi was a participant already introduced in Chapter 6. He stated that during his entire career as a hairdresser the women used to love him, but not the men. I asked him why. He explained as follows:

'L: Well, Simona, you know, the terrible experience of the War was still fresh in people's minds. Especially, here in the North, they have suffered a lot. Lots of people died. We were enemies on the field. They had been offended, could you imagine? I remember when I was 12, or 13 years old, in Italy we had on the Fascist shirts with some labels on the top: "God curse at the English". So there was some friction between English and Italians. Especially amongst "il populino."<sup>76</sup> When I came, people still continued to pay debts for the War. I remember the "rationing card" used for the rationing of the food. In Italy, we didn't have it at the same time. Men used to talk a lot about this political context, especially the men who attended the pubs. Imagine that the men who just came back from the War were maximum 30 years old, so more or less my age. I used to avoid these places, as they were full of angry people. I just couldn't go there on my own. I was one of the first Italians in town. I preferred to avoid those places to avoid being in trouble.

S: Which kind of troubles?

L: Well, fighting, you know drunk chaps. I didn't like drinking anyway. I used to prefer places where more educated people used to appreciate me for who I was, regardless of my national identity. As I told you, with my job I was introduced to a higher class of people.'

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<sup>76</sup> This could be translated as 'working-class people'.

(Luigi, Translated into English, January 2016)

Mr. Luigi's choice of places to socialize was influenced by the people who used to attend those places. He identifies 'pubs' as places where ex-soldiers could undermine his sense of security, while 'more educated people' avoided discrimination based on national identity.<sup>77</sup> Through Luigi's example, I learned that the anti-Italian feeling experienced by Italian migrants who moved to the UK many years after the War influenced the process of adaptation to the new context. Hence, this group of people developed different ways to integrate. The same rhetoric influenced integration, level of participation among this group of people and, sometimes, constituted the basis for withdrawing from public life, and social exclusion. Proshansky *et al.* (1983) would have defined what Luigi is describing as 'defensive withdrawal'. By asserting that some individual might avoid certain places in order to preserve self-integrity, the scholar explains how this is related to place-identity. As such, Luigi seems to prefer some other places – also connected with class- in his first years of migration in the UK. Moreover, the defensive withdrawal associated with a perceived sense of discrimination was confirmed by Elena, a participant introduced in the Chapter 6.

When Elena arrived, aged 18 years old, she said that she was already 'old' enough to go to school. She used to spend her time only with the family (Anglo-Italian) she worked for. However, she did not meet or interact with many English people.

E: I have heard lots of people who said the same [about anti-Italian feeling], but I didn't notice! All the others who went to the school yes, they were treated badly because of the War! But I didn't go to school. I didn't go anywhere.

S: So you were far from being in contact with English people?

E: Si. While I couldn't understand anything about it. Somebody else, like Carlo, yeah, but I, I don't know about it.'

(Elena, Translated into English, September, 2015)

I want to highlight here how the perception of being part of a social category of people with specific characteristics influenced participants' engagement,

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<sup>77</sup> See also Skeggs (1997), who shows the old division between the respectable and non-respectable ('rough') working-class (Skeggs, 1997; see also Watt, 2006, p. 778, and Tyler, 2011) on the theme of discrimination based on national identities.

participation, or lack of it in the public sphere. As reported by Elena, some lacked the resources or will to integrate with local people very much, and she referred to other Italian migrants, who, according to their perspectives, had more opportunity to socialize, and to provide examples of discrimination they learned indirectly.

The examples reported in this chapter illustrate that participants legitimate – and sometimes justify – the experiences of discrimination that they were victims of or had learned about. Therefore, my data might confirm what Fortier (2000) noted about “resentment towards Britain [being] strikingly absent” among this population. Fortier asserted that, when people recall these stories, they do not blame Britons for the internment policy, or for physical or verbal abuse, but consider that they were “victims of the circumstances and that Britain acted as any nation would” (Fortier, 2000 p.91). However, implicitly or explicitly, given the knowledge of the wartime rhetoric and the ‘unwritten rules’ generated amongst the community of Italian migrants, some preferred to stay away from places where there was the threat of presumed discrimination. This withdrawal in the earlier stages of migration might be the long-term consequence of the experience of anti-Italian feeling among this group of people.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This chapter concerned with the historical, social and political construction of the Italian migrant identity. I explored the way Italian migrants, and those who are resident in Britain with Italian origin, thought to be perceived in different social, historical and political contexts, and challenged or coped with a ranged of imposed identities. This contributed to created discourses about ‘Italianness’ and, I argue that, these discourses, shaping attitudes and behaviours, forged participants’ sense of identity, attachment and belonging, accordingly.

In some degrees, the analyses of my participants’ memories of the past experience of *anti-Italian feeling* and war time rhetoric of being an ‘enemy alien’, as articulated in the present, 70 years later, brought into view the processes of contestation, negotiation, revision and construction of a sense of identity, attachment and belonging. I focused on the production of socio-cultural difference and identity within the locality of Newcastle, and illustrated how this impacted on a sense of belonging (or not) to a wider national community. The findings pertained to self-attribution and

attribution by others, but also pointed to the development of a collective history that has contributed to the formation of ethnic and national belonging.

Whilst the previous literature on the experiences of the Italian migrants in the UK during the war time paid less attention to the long term impact of 'the anti-Italian feeling' on sense of being and belonging (Colpi, 1992; Sponza, 2000), my data show, in line with Ugolini (2011), that a personal sense of identity and citizenship may have been undermined by experiences of discrimination towards this group of people. Although there is no simple way to provide a clear explanation to questions that animate public debates in relation to nationhood, ethnicity and citizenship in time of conflict, I have illustrated how the articulation of ethnic and national belonging amongst older Italian migrants in Newcastle developed during their life course, and shifted over time due to this particular historical context. The importance of experiences of discrimination during the Second World War is significant not merely for the kind of history they represent, but for the influence on the way this group of people shaped and forged a sense of national belonging, and negotiated or revised a sense of identity. Hence, the examples provided have shown how the social and political context played a crucial role in challenging national belonging and sense of citizenship.

Firstly, the data reported revealed the complexity around the definition of the self through the category of being an Italian migrant in the particular historical time of the Second World War. The findings report traumatic memories amongst the second and third generation, who found themselves in a hostile environment. Secondly, these data illustrate that the xenophobic riots erupted, made the anti-Italian feeling visible. Consequently, I reflected on the interpretation of historical events that contributed to establishing the categories of 'us' and 'them' at a national level. On the one hand, this hostile environment determined a sense of difference, discrimination, and marginalization amongst British people of Italian origins, within the communities where they were born and had lived ever since. On the other hand, wartime discourses about Italians as 'enemy aliens' heightened the sense of not-belonging to a British identity, and made visible and relevant the concept of 'Italianness' in the everyday classification of the self.

My data confirmed the literature on the Italian history (Colpi, 1991; Fortier, 2000; Sponza, 2000; Ugolini, 2011) by showing how nation-state policies of internment and

deportation, in addition to the anti-Italian feeling, constituted a highly resonant event for the third generation Anglo-Italians in Newcastle who participated in my research. Moreover, my data enrich this literature by revealing that being identified as 'enemy alien' by local people, regardless of status, years of residency, and the citizenship of family members, undermined and influenced their subjective definition of identity and belonging during the ethnographic research encounters. This helped me to discuss how anti-Italian feeling impacted on the sense of belonging (or not) to a wider national community for the Italian population in Newcastle.

Secondly, these data have shown how, in the attempt to defend themselves, Italians tried to hide their national belonging from the public gaze in different ways: changing their Italian names to English ones, not using the Italian language in public places, and hiding as much as possible any cultural behaviour identifiable as Italian, such as preferences in food and drink. Participants reported that there was a need to conform outdoors, and therefore cultural identity was only displayed in the public sphere, preserving everyday attitudes (meanings, values) within the private dwelling. From this, I argued that participants expressed a preference for the outdoors sphere towards the assimilation of the new culture, while indoors there was a conservative impetus to retain the old, traditional behaviours. Within the indoor vs. outdoor, private vs. public dichotomy, the Italians I interviewed reminisced about deploying a dual identity based on circumstances.

Finally, I have shown how wartime discourses asserted their presence much later amongst those who had never experienced it in person, through oral history. This confirms that the wartime rhetoric of 'enemy aliens' was reiterated amongst different generations of migrants. I considered the role of chain migration as a vehicle to exchange information, and establish the social representations that shaped and forged participants' perspectives. These data have shown that the first generation Italian migrants, who moved to the UK after the Second World War, also inherited knowledge of discrimination towards Italians due to the War, and adapted to the socio-cultural context accordingly, which thus accepted and reinforced this version of history. Having introduced the topic of how this forged and influenced the sense of identity and belonging, I argued that this had implications for integration (or a lack of it: withdrawn to the social sphere). As it has been acknowledged socialization and engagement in communities provide subjective well-being in later life (Walsh and O'shea, 2008; Walsh and Gannon, 2011). Therefore, feeling of belonging and



participation are particularly important for ageing migrants, such as at risk of loneliness, isolation, social exclusion (Scharf *et al.*, 2005; Victor *et al.*, 2012). Finally, I would argue that exploring subjective definitions and interpretations of the historical events of the Second World War and the rhetoric of 'anti-Italian feeling' from the perspective of older Italian migrants is fundamental to the understanding of the process of self-representation amongst this population. Having paid attention to the historical and contested political nature of being and belonging, it was possible to grasp the social and historical dimension of place attachment, as conceptualized by Burholt (2006). These oral histories brought to view how a sense of identification with places is never fully achieved in older age amongst some of the Italians in Newcastle who participated in my study.

## **Chapter 8. Conclusion**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter recaps the aim of the research and explains how this has been met. The chapter begins by providing a brief summary of the research questions, methodology and overall argument. By reflecting on the key findings, the key contributions of the study are outlined. It is explained how the research contributes to the existing discussion in social gerontology on ageing in the context of migration. The chapter continues by discussing the areas for future research. It concludes by providing the limitations of the research that can be addressed in future studies.

### **8.2 Brief summary**

This doctoral research project focuses on the dynamic and relational interplay of places, identities and experiences of later life at individual and collective level. The central themes of this thesis are the affective bonds between people and places from the perspective of ageing migrants. The overall aim of this dissertation was to identify what factors shaped a sense of attachment to and identification with places inhabited in the context of migration. To do so, I focused, firstly, on exploring the relationship between place attachment and place identity, secondly, considered the way in which migrants identities are transmitted across the life course through linked lives of first, second and third older Italian migrants generation. Thirdly, I explored the contribution of material culture to transnational identities and, finally, I illustrated the facilitators and barriers for creating a sense of home amongst older Italians in Newcastle.

Ethnographic fieldwork was carried out for 12 months, and constituted participant observation, in depth and semi-structured interviews. A total of 60 Italians living in Newcastle were recruited for this study, and a total of 41 in-depth and semi-structured audio-recorded interviews were conducted with 27 participants. Field notes, material acquired from participant observations and the ethnographic interviews were analysed by thematic analysis.

The overall argument of this piece of work is that a sense of attachment to and identification with the context of migration facilitates the extent for a positive experience of ageing, because these are essential conditions for a 'sense of home' in later life. Thus, this thesis argues that a 'sense of home' – or a lack of it – shapes the

experience of ageing-in-place in the context of migration, from the perspective of older Italian migrants in Newcastle.

To sum up the main findings, as several examples have evidenced, a sense of attachment and identity to the context of migration in later life is defined by: social aspects of the environment, formal practices of identity, transnationality, home-making practices in private and public places, throughout the life and in different historical contexts. Therefore, it has been discussed how the affective bonds established with places is a further aspect that enhances diversity within the group of ageing migrants.

As illustrated in the image below (Figure 18), this research has contributed to an enriched understanding of the overarching concept of a 'sense of home' to the context of migration in later life, defined by place attachment and place identity. The relationship between these two affective bonds were made visible by the meanings associated to places inhabited by the participants. Attachment and identification to places have been addressed from different levels of spatial scale that are both locational and social.

### Sense of home: Place Attachment and Place Identity

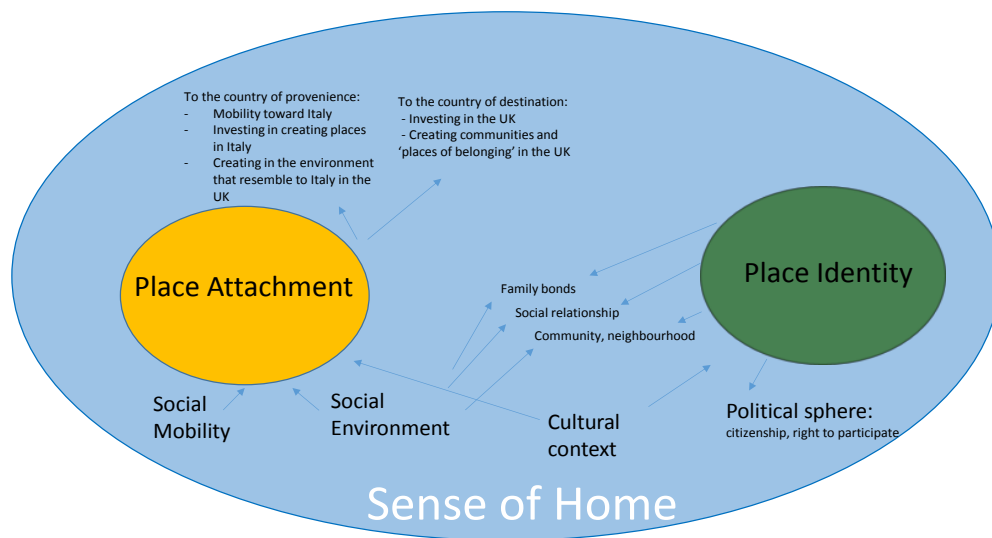


Figure 18 Conclusive diagram, illustrating main findings.

It has been shown how the attachment to the Italian places of provenience is expressed through mobility across countries; investment – emotionally and financially amongst other kinds- in creating places in Italy (i.e. private dwelling planning to return

to in later life, etc.); furnishing and decorating private dwelling in the UK to with material culture that resemble places left pre migration. Place attachment to places inhabited after migration is expressed through investment in creating communities and places of belonging in the UK. Factors that influence place attachment to the places inhabited after migration are social mobility and social aspects of the environment. The latter includes family bonds, social relationships and communities at different scales. Thus, the sense of social embeddedness, given family, communities and neighbourhood ties developed over time, play an important role in defining sense of attachment with places inhabited in later life. These factors also shape place identity, which, at individual level, is constituted by a sense of belonging to an 'imaginary community' and formal practices of identification (such as citizenship and right to participate to political sphere and politics of migration), throughout the life. It has been shown how the social and cultural context of the country of settlement, determined by the historical contingencies, shaped both place attachment and place identity of older Italian migrants in Newcastle. The lack of a 'sense of home' referred to a feeling of not entirely belonging to the place inhabited in later life. This informed on a shared set of cultural experiences, the legacy of which continue to inform notions of home amongst linked lives of migrants. Therefore, it has been discussed how the affective bonds established with these places needs to be enacted and reinforced within the group of people I worked with. These insights might contribute to intervention research, aiming at improving physical and social aspects of the environment, making the world a better place to age also for older migrants, in line with the on-going challenge of interdisciplinary scholarship engaged with places, older people and their quality of life (Walsh and Näre, 2016; Skinner *et al.*, 2017).

### **8.3 Research Questions and Key Findings**

#### ***8.3.1 Defining Place Attachment and Place Identity***

The first research question of this dissertation relates to the relationship between place attachment and place identity, from the perspective of older Italian migrants in Newcastle. To answer to this research question, the findings in Chapter 4 and 6 show that there are different degrees of attachment to places inhabited, and that these might co-exist with a sense of attachment to places left prior migration. As evidenced by findings in Chapter 5, exploring the meaning of places in a migrant population by addressing transnationality and home-making practices might be useful

to get an understanding of place attachment. I discussed how a high sense of attachment to places is experienced by ageing people when the process of migration shaped their sense of place identity. In this respect, participants articulated their identities based on the presumed characteristics of the place, or the everyday life practices. A complex nuance of a sense of identification with places was shown and how this plays out at social, community and national level. It has been shown how both place attachment and place identity constitute an overarching concept defined as a 'sense of home' that embraces notion of emotional affiliation, self-expression and ultimately belonging. Thus, the two emotional bonds are mutually interdependent.

Thanks to these findings and the multidisciplinary approach adopted, this project contributed to clarify, in some extends, the relationship between the concept of place attachment and place Identity (Lewicka, 2011). Hence, in contrast with the argument of some scholars (Brown and Werner, 1985; Stedman, 2002; Burholt, 2006), my findings show that these two concepts cannot be used interchangeably and synonymously. This was particularly evidenced in Chapter 4 and 7, as some participants reported a high sense of attachment to places, but a lack of identification with these. Thus, my contribution is to argue that whilst the sense of place attachment might be a component of place identity, in line with some scholars (Lalli, 1992), it cannot be said the contrary. Moreover, my research shows that place attachment includes factors such as dependence and social bonds, in line with Kyle *et al.* (2005). However, it is only when the concept of place attachment is in relation to the sense of identification with places that it provides insights on how 'a sense of home' might be defined. Hence, as also evidenced in chapters 4 and 5, the sense of attachment to places might decrease for a different meaning attributed to places. Nonetheless, the sense of identification to these might persist, regardless the extent of attachment, being shaped by a sense of belonging. Thus, I argue that these two concepts have to be explored simultaneously, as place attachment and place identity are mutually interdependent. However, given the fact that the participants of this research used different expressions to refer to these concepts, further research is needed to clarify the definitions and the relationship between place identity, attachment, and the relationship with related terms, such as a sense of belonging.

A further reason for exploring the concepts of place attachment and place identity simultaneously is because these intersect with the notion of ageing, as evidenced by

findings in Chapter 4. When a high attachment to places is experienced, leading to identification to places inhabited, participants reported a positive feeling of ageing in the context of migration, associated with a positive sense of well-being, and social engagement. This was evidenced as a key contribution of these data as a positive experience of ageing was reported by those participants whom social and political aspects of the environment enable identification with the context of migration. These older adults had stopped comparing their life condition with that of their peers in Italy, or, despite this, had found several advantages to age-in-place in the context of migration. However, on the contrary, as illustrated in Chapter 4, a general sense of frustration and lack of agency is experienced when affective bonds with places are questioning or are lacking. Some participants are not attached to the place in which they are growing older, and imagine moving elsewhere in the future, or wish it was possible. Thus, identification with the social-cultural practices of the adoptive country foster a sense of identification with places inhabited amongst older Italian migrants in Newcastle, and it is related to a positive idea of ageing. These findings provide interesting insights to the changing relationship between identity and places over the life-course (Rowles, 2017) also from the perspective of older migrants.

### *8.3.2 Defining migrants' identities across the life course*

The second research question aimed to illustrate ways in which migrants' identities are transmitted across the life course through linked lives to the first, second and third older Italian migrants generation.

To answer this research question, in Chapter 4, the articulation of identity was explored across different migrants' generations. As several examples have evidenced, the articulation of identity was complex to define, given a sense of dual belonging, in betweenness and hybrid identities. In the majority of cases, social relations were used as resources for self-understanding. As such, it was reported that a dual sense of identity, due to interpretation of external social influences mediated by sources of socialization (family, school, social groups) and consequentially a sense of affiliation to an 'imaginary community. Thus, a way of transmitting migrants' identities amongst this group of people was found in the experience of sociality with people of the same place of provenience (such as the community setting where some participants regularly meet), and transnationality across countries (Schiller, 2004; Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015), as evidenced in Chapter 5.

In this respect, contrasting examples of mobility across countries have shown what is 'home' and what is 'abroad' from an older migrant perspective. A 'sense of home' in the context of migration was revealed by the circular lifestyle and transnationalism due to the attachment to both physical and social aspects of the environment in places left behind by migration. It has been shown how the annual visit to the Italian villages strengthen a sense of community and a migrant identity, and that this practices was transmitted through generations. Despite having identified their 'home' in the context of migration, my findings confirmed that for this group of people it remains important to cultivate rapport and relationships through transnational ties during their older age. This is in line with previous findings in the literature amongst older migrants (Phillipson, 2015), who continuously maintain links with multiple communities across borders. According to Phillipson (2015), the relationship built with others, and the nature of communities and how these change over time as people move through their life course, are important factors to consider amongst older migrants. In fact, in the context of my research, older migrants after retirement wish to maintain transnational ties with people and places left pre-migration reinforcing their migrants' identities. For those who are less mobile, material culture was interpreted as constituting of transnational way of belonging (Schiller, 2004) and a way to transmit migrants' identities across the life course, through linked lives. This lead to the next research question, however, before moving on to this, I wish to add a further way in which migrants identities were transmitted amongst the group of people I worked with: through a shared set of cultural experiences, the legacy of which continue to inform notions of home amongst first, second and third generation of migrants, as illustrated in Chapter 6 and 7.

In fact, having highlighted the importance of place-ties in determining the extent of and opportunities for a sense of home in the context of migration, these have been identified in physical aspects of the environment and meanings these convey. Hence, especially amongst labour migrants, some places (homes, coffee shops, ice-cream parlours, and hairdresser salons) enabled reestablishment of sense of self after the process of migration in younger age. This is because these places were symbols of social mobility and provided self-esteem and a sense of gratitude to the context of migration in older age. Starting from experiences of displacement and relocation, participants had been engaged in conversation about the meanings or experiences of these places. These conversations generated a narrative repertoire oriented towards stressing the social and economic development achieved over the course of time by

the process of migration: personal growth, or family social mobility through generations. This data might add to the current literature on a 'sense of home' in a migrant population (Buffel and Phillipson, 2016; Näre, 2016; Walsh, 2016b) that sense of attachment to places is not only related to the physical aspects of the environment, but also to the intangible, emotional meanings attributed to these. Places, such as homes and businesses, shape ageing migrants' sense of identity in later life, providing these people with a sense of respectability. This was shown to contribute to strengthening their sense of attachment to places inhabited, neighbourhood and communities, and also to transmit values related to a migrant identity through linked lives and across generations. Data have shown how some participants 'have stopped to be a migrant' (section 6.2) when their role in the country of destination has changed. When from perceive themselves as 'impoverished migrants' (section 6.3.2) they become landlords, business owners. Therefore, these data suggest the need to consider further aspects: such as the role played in society (labour, social and political role) to re-establish a 'sense of home' in the context of migration. Thus, these findings suggest that establish place ties with the context of migration is a turning point of the migrant experience toward feeling of attachment and identification that is passed on across generations. This was particularly clear after having learned how a sense of identification to places amongst this group of people changed over time, in different historical contexts.

In this respect, private places mentioned above acquired a peculiar meaning also in relation to an historical time of discrimination due to a different national identity, as illustrated in Chapter 7. Evidence reported in Chapter 7 (that link back to Chapter 4) illustrated how some older Italian migrants have had experience of double jeopardy and consequent disassociation with places, or interpret some contingencies of the everyday life under this light. The main contribution of these findings was to document the oral history of the War time period and beyond, as relevant historical material for Newcastle heritage. As such, in order to explore the meanings of affective bonds with places from the perspective of older Italian migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne, in this dissertation, the themes explored are weaved at an interplay with time. This means that the focus on the current experiences of ageing in the context of migration might not be sufficiently explicative of the relationship with places from an older migrant perspective. To grasp the meanings of the affective bonds these people established with places, it was necessary to make visible participants' interpretation of the past, situated in places. Hence, some places are



important in locating social memories among this group of people, symbolizing embodied time, shared histories, trauma and emotions. As my data have shown, the meanings of places require the contextualization of these in the social historical context. This insight was made possible by adopting a biographical approach. This means that a biographical approach, historical situated in the context of people's life, is well suited to get an understanding of these phenomena. Methodologically, the contribution of this research suggests exploring beyond the present context of migration to turn to early stages of migration, and expectation pre-migration. Hence, only by looking at how data are contextualized in participants' life stories, was it possible to unpack in more detail the conditions for a sense of attachment and identification to places inhabited. As such, this study contribute on the current stress for qualitative research and life history technique to uncover the complexity of later life, and meanings of places among older migrants (Walsh and Näre, 2016; Skinner *et al.*, 2017).

### *8.3.3 Defining the role of material culture*

The third research question aimed to illustrate the contribution of material culture for identities of older Italians in Newcastle.

To answer this question, in Chapter 5, data highlighted the importance of the domestic sphere in the process of belonging and the expression of a cultural identity amongst the older Italian migrants I worked with. Participant observation of the meaningful 'home-making' practices in private dwelling favoured construction of meanings associated with places. Visual representations of places, and cultural heritage associated to these, were used to negotiate place attachment. These findings are in line with the research of previous scholars on material culture amongst a migrant population (Tolia-Kelly, 2004; Walsh, 2006; Savaş, 2014; Walsh, 2016a), showing how the perception of appropriation of places in private domains through material possessions sustains identification with culture and places of provenience. Moreover, private dwellings and the possessions they contain are not only an effort to reconstruct the past (family of origin, tradition, heritage), but also a way to express the idea of ageing amongst the older Italians I worked with. As such, material culture symbolizes the future expectation of ageing after retirement, as a stage of life in which to re-establish a connection with places left pre-migration in different ways. These findings add to this existing literature that some amongst this group of people identified a transnational border between counties through material and symbolic

aspects of the place. However, interestingly, findings show that material culture plays a role also in reinforcing affective bonds to places inhabited in the context of migration, furnishing and decorating practices. These strategies help to reflect on a sense of agency in later life in re-creating a 'sense of home' in the context of migration. Thus, the intersection of material culture studies, ageing studies and migration studies appears to be a key contribution of this work.

A further contribution of material culture for the definition of migrants' identity was that it linked the subjective present with the past. In line with Lewin (2005) home history among older migrants is hardly known, and this was particularly the case in context of this study. Hence, by exploring the dichotomy between practices of expression of a sense of identity in public and private domains, this research has shown (Chapter 7) how the historical, social and cultural context played a crucial role in defining barriers to a sense of attachment to the context of migration. The experiences of 'othering' in the context of migration contributed to strengthen a sense of attachment to an ethnic identity (also in second or third generation Italian migrants) and segregation within members of the same migrant group. Participants reported that there was a need to conform outdoors, and therefore cultural identity and everyday attitudes were only displayed in the public sphere. Within the indoor vs. outdoor dichotomy, the Italians I interviewed reminisced about having deployed a dual identity based on circumstances. The main contribution of these findings relate to the use of places and consequences on identity that have not been a previous concern in the study of the intersection between material culture study and British Italian history that this thesis brought to view. Moreover, this is a contribution that can provide evidence based on theorization of circumstantial ethnicity, as conceptualized by Torres (2015).

In this respect, this knowledge contributes to challenging the double jeopardy trope in societies (Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015), such as the disadvantages of being both an older adult and a person with a migrant background. In contrast, these private/public places (coffee shops, ice-cream parlours, and hairdresser salons) have been shown as supporting social opportunities for older migrants. Arising from proximity to family and other community members, these environments enable social connections with staff or customers, raising attachment to and identification with the neighbourhood. Therefore, in these places older Italian migrants are not jeopardized, but feel valued. This might be an aspect that can be explored better in further

research to understand how to replicate the feeling of identity and belonging amongst older migrants, beyond these places. This might imply the need for intervention on a social and cultural level aiming at challenging the double jeopardy trope, especially in the current historical and political scenario, as I address in the Epilogue of this dissertation.

#### *8.3.4 Defining facilitators and barriers to place attachment and place identity*

Drawing on these previous research questions, this dissertation moved on to identify the facilitators and barriers to place attachment and place identity among this group of people, as the fourth research question.

As evidenced by findings in Chapter 6, some older Italians manifest a high sense of place attachment to the country of destination and high identification with the places inhabited, interpreting migration as an achievement in later life. These ageing migrants consider their accomplished histories of aspirations to be the facilitators of a sense of attachment and identification with places, highlighting their agency and self-determination in 'the land of opportunity'. In addition, creation of places (and communities) was found as a facilitator for place attachment and places identity throughout life. This was due to a sense of achievement and social mobility but also because participants showed how created places helped rebuild the sense of self. Thus, the role played by these places in later life appears to be a key contribution of these findings. Hence, by highlighting the blurred borders between public and private domains, these environments defined as material result of mobility, provided with a sense of social 'insideness' (Rowles, 1983) amongst local communities and neighbourhood. As such, these places constituted a social hub in later life that helped to overcome loneliness and isolation (Scharf et al., 2005; Victor et al., 2012). Consequently, these transnational spaces of belonging (Schiller, 2004) contributed to raise place attachment and place identity in the context of migration among an Italian migrant population.

These findings have also shown the barriers to a sense of identification with the places inhabited in the context of migration. As evidenced by findings in Chapter 4 and 7, the lack of sense of attachment to and identification with places depends on social aspects of the environment and formal practices of identification. The first refers to the lack of a sense of community, social isolation, or the lack of motivation for being in the context of migration. The second refers to the ways Italian ageing

migrants were 'othered' or perceived so by the nation state, feeling excluded by formal practices of belonging and not being considered a citizen with the same civic rights. The politics of migration therefore came to the fore, showing how socially constructed practices of identification might have limits. This shed lights on the complexity of ageing in the context of migration by pointing out how a sense of identification is never fully achieved in older age.

Facilitators and barriers for a sense of attachment to and identification with places inhabited in the context of migration will be summed up here. Facilitators identified by this research project: social and political aspects of the environment: family ties, communities, social groups, neighbourhoods (Chapter 4); mobility across countries: maintaining transnational connection by visiting people and places, and ageing across countries (Chapter 5); social mobility and the realization of places of belonging where to exercise a social role in later life (Chapter 6). Barriers identified by this research project: formal practices of belonging: citizenship, right to vote on a national level (Chapter 4); politics of migration: being labelled as an 'alien' when firstly migrated in the UK; loss of citizenship due to marriage as part of the migration policy before 1973 (Chapter 4) that might limit the individual freedom to relocate elsewhere; feeling of being 'othered' in particular historical and social contexts, a crucial foundation for barriers to a sense of identification to places. The experience of World War Two, directly or not, was considered a barrier to sense of identification to places inhabited in the context of migration (Chapter 7).

#### **8.4 Research key contributions**

This dissertation might contribute to address the issue of global ageing and international migration in several ways: firstly, by contributing to the current debate in social gerontology, giving attention to older migrants, grasping the diversity of ageing; secondly by highlighting the heterogeneity within the group of ageing migrants; and finally, by providing a better understanding of older migrants' experiences of later life. Furthermore, this dissertation might suggest implementation of strategies to public policies and services interested to older adults' needs and on the enhancement of their quality of life, focusing in particular on health and well-being as people age. I will touch upon these points in the following sections.

#### *8.4.1 Attention to older migrants*

I began this dissertation by highlighting how globalization of international migration and the rise of transnational communities increase the diversity of the ageing population. It has been argued that the increased ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of the aging population needs more consideration (Warnes *et al.*, 2004; Torres, 2006; Buffel *et al.*, 2012; Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015; Torres, 2015; Zubair and Norris, 2015; Torres and Karl, 2016; King *et al.*, 2017). By raising awareness of older migrants as a substantial component of the older population, this dissertation aims to contribute to the current scholarly debate at the intersection between ageing and migration.

This work has focused the attention to a group of people, such as the older Italians in Newcastle, belonging to a wider group defined in the previous literature as 'invisible migrants' (Fortier, 2000). While with this expression the scholar referred to a certain degree of assimilation and adaptation to the Italians in Britain, she also remarked a lack of research attention to this minority group. My findings have also added to this point how the 'invisibility' was a consequence of the historical, cultural and political context during and after World War Two. Attachment at a personal level introduced temporality, alongside the experiences of different generations as informative of shared set of cultural experiences, the legacy of which continues to inform notions of home, migrant identities and issues of ageing in place.

#### *8.4.2 Heterogeneity within the group of ageing migrants*

The findings of this research confirmed the need to problematize the overgeneralization about older Italian migrants in Newcastle based on cultural homogeneity. By highlighting the heterogeneity and diversity of this group of people, the reported data contradicted the stereotypical assumptions in social gerontology, according to which older migrants are the same (Torres, 2006). By highlighting the difficulties of interacting with social services (Warnes *et al.*, 2004), risk of social exclusion (Scharf *et al.*, 2005), isolation (Victor *et al.*, 2012), - only to mention a few examples illustrated in Chapter 2- the mainstream tendency in social gerontology framed older migrants with several disadvantages and vulnerabilities influencing the way these groups are perceived.

Without neglecting the importance of previous research on ageing in the context of migration, it has been remarked that over-generalization of experiences and the

vulnerable condition of ageing migrants leads to the construction of 'otherness', as assumed to have 'special needs' (Torres, 2006, p. 1351). Nonetheless, assuming that ethnicity determines who we are (Torres, 2013), often ageing research has taken for granted cultural homogeneity of older migrants, only partially addressing the diversity within the ethnic group (Torres, 2015).

To contrast these assumptions, and in line with a wider literature at the intersection between ageing and migration, the findings of my thesis confirm that the diversity within the group relates to social and economic status, age in which migration took place, reasons for migrating (Warnes *et al.*, 1999; Warnes *et al.*, 2004; Torres, 2009). These findings might contribute to social gerontology research adding a further aspect that enhances the diversity within the groups of older migrants, such as the affective bonds with places. The diversity within the group of older Italian migrants in Newcastle pertains to the attachment and identification with the places inhabited.

#### *8.4.3 Affective bonds to understand the diversity within*

As argued above, the heterogeneity within the group of people with whom I worked, in terms of their relationship with places, has shed light on the notion of ageing, and of what it means to age in a positive way. This diversity in the affective bonds with places is ultimately important on the conditions for 'ageing-in-place' in the context of migration.

The data shown highlight the importance of the attachment to place in ageing in the context of migration, but also a complex nuance of how this plays out in different ways: envisioning the 'best place' in which to age, some do not feel identified with places inhabited in later life, as they lack a sense of community; perceiving to be 'othered' throughout their life, or only in older age, and experiencing a sense of discomfort in the idea of being buried in a place where they do not belong. In contrast, those who experienced a positive sense of well-being in ageing in places, had shaped their identities based on the presumed characteristics of the place or everyday life practices embedded in these. Therefore, I argue that the diversity within the ageing migrant lies in the relationship established with places: whilst low attachment to the place inhabited causes discomfort generated by the expectation of ageing differently or desire to age elsewhere, a high level of attachment shapes identity, a sense of belonging, and the conception of ageing in a positive manner. Thus, attachment to places and sense of identification to these are important

condition to determine the choice of aging in the context of migration or moving elsewhere. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, this heterogeneity within the group of ageing migrants should be taken into account as informing research. Moreover, this can suggest that interventions of policy makers need to take into account such diversity for better meet older migrants' needs. Without such recognition, policy will remain less effective, as based on a homogenous category.

#### *8.4.4 Affective bonds to understand mobility after retirement*

I began the dissertation by highlighting the rationale for this research questions, such as the mobility of older people after retirement age and the need for understanding the factors that shape alternatives that older migrants have: remaining in the country of settlement; returning to the country of provenience or adopting a transnational lifestyle (Razum *et al.*, 2005; Bolzman *et al.*, 2006; Ganga, 2006; Klinthäll, 2006; Rodríguez and Egea, 2006; Barrett and Mosca, 2013; Baykara-Krumme, 2013; Torres, 2013; Phillipson, 2015; Zontini, 2015; Baykara-Krumme and Platt, 2016; Torres and Karl, 2016). Hence, the contrasting examples provided have focused on the relationship between ageing Italian migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne, and places inhabited.

Having focused on the relationship with homeland, a major concern in the literature of migration (Clifford, 1997; Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016), the result of my research contradicts the previous literature on Italian migrants in regards a desire to relocate in places of origin after retirement (Gabaccia, 2000; Baldassar, 2001; Fortier, 2006; Baldassar, 2007; Wessendorf, 2007; Zontini, 2015). In fact, my data are in line with the cyclic nature of migrants' return visits to their places of origin, as described by Ganga (2006), as potential returnees, as the dream of relocation was already part of their migration plan. However, the participants did not consider relocating permanently to their country of origin, at the time of the interview. Despite this, they assert the importance of mobility in their later life. In some participants' cases dwelling were built for maintaining relationships with places, and acquired a particular meaning in later life, as part of pre-migration plan. However, the findings show that this group of people consider 'home' the context of migration, and Italy is viewed as a place to relax. As such, it has been argued that the mobility across countries and attachment to them should not have been interpreted as opposite and mutually exclusive phenomena.

Moreover, exploration through material culture has made it possible to assert that this group of people, being highly attached to the context of migration, do not consider returning to Italy as a possibility in their life after retirement. Returning home would mean separation from those places of belonging, reconstructed through the process of migration constituted by people and places. In line with previous studies (Näre, 2016) also these findings challenges the idea that home is not homeland. However, when the conditions for 'ageing in place', both at the physical or social level, are not met in the context of migration, my data have illustrated a lack of attachment to places inhabited that might determine the extent for relocation in different places. Hence, the data have shown the conditions of engagement (high place attachment) or disengagement or estrangement (low place attachment) among an older migrant population. Therefore, I wish to consider these people as potential returnees. These findings add to the current literature on ageing and migration the importance of understanding the peculiarities associated with the transnational life (Torres, 2013) and inform migration policy, as tailored to older adults needs at national and transnational levels.

#### *8.4.5 Contribution to understanding the positive notion of ageing*

The analyses of the findings about a 'sense of home' – or a lack of it – amongst different Italian migrants' generations also showed how older age is interpreted amongst this group of people. This was evidenced as a key contribution of these data, as affective bonds with places intersect with conceptualization of ageing. A positive experience of ageing was reported by those participants whom social and political aspects of the environment enable identification with the context of migration. Hence, identification with the social-cultural practices of the adoptive country foster a sense of belonging amongst older Italian migrants in Newcastle.

The examples reported in the empirical chapters have shown how place attachment and place identity to places inhabited shaped the perceived sense of well-being in the context of migration. High levels of identification with the context of migration shape a high sense of attachment to places. This determined a positive perception of ageing in the context of migration, even in envisioning the end of life in these places. This consequently informed a positive interpretation of the experience of migration, the ability to socialize and being engaged in activities of recreation, and participating in social and public affairs of the context of migration. This appeared to be a great contribution of this work, in line with previous research on the individual and societal



benefits of ageing members empowering themselves by being involved at community levels (Walsh and O'shea, 2008). Hence, social participation, club membership, and network support have been shown as influencing on health outcomes preventing the onset of ageing (Walsh and Gannon, 2011). As argued by scholars on ageing, enhance relationship and fostering cohesion between generations and different older population sub-groups (Walsh et al., 2012) should be a key point for policy makers.

On the other hand, the lack of a sense of home in the context of migration, due to a lack of a sense of attachment to places and identification with them, might negatively impact on a sense of health and well-being in later life. It has been shown how participants reported a sense of loneliness, isolation, and shrinking social network. This was due, in some cases, to a limited mobility due to physical constraints of ageing. These findings can contribute to the current literature on older migrants that evidenced how some groups of people might be at risk of experiencing social issues with an impact on health outcomes (Scharf et al., 2005; Victor et al., 2012; Buffel et al., 2014). In other cases, a lack of affective bonds with places inhabited in the context of migration generated a comparison between places in which to grow older and a desire to age elsewhere. In this respect, this thesis might contribute to provide insights to the theory of the residential normalcy as illustrated by Golant (2018), in considering the place of residence in a bigger scale (house as a city, region, state). Hence, this research has shown how some older Italians, even when perceiving problems of ageing in the context of migration, tends to ignore the opportunities of change, minimize the issues and rationalize by considering the problem not that serious. As theorized by the residential normalcy theory (Golant, 2018) explained in Chapter 2, the strategies adopted by older people to cope with residential problems depends on the subjective interpretation of their coping opportunities. In some cases, older people might not be fully aware of the alternative solutions to their problems, and consequently might not take concrete actions, but instead they rely on accommodative mind strategy, just by minimizing the problems. This might happen the case of some older migrants, who might feel trapped in a place that they might not fully feel identified with, but they might rationalize by saying that this is not very serious. As such, place attachment and place identity allow a positive or negative experience of 'ageing-in-place' from the perspective of the older Italian migrants in Newcastle. Therefore, it has been argued that affective bonds have an impact on sense of health and well-being from an older migrant point of view, thus they cannot be disregarded.

#### 8.4.6 Contribution to policy on ageing

As illustrated in Chapter 1, the lack of research attention on older migrants is particularly evident in the context of global policy for ageing. In order to overcome this challenge, this research project has drawn on the ageing policy initiative '*Global Age-Friendly Cities Project*' (WHO, 2007a) which considers the effects that places have on health and well-being as people age and recommends interventions in the physical and social aspects of the environment (Lui *et al.*, 2009; Plouffe, 2010; Buffel *et al.*, 2012; Iecovich, 2014). Within the 'Age friendly' agenda, the widespread 'Ageing-in-Place' policy is based on research focuses on the meanings of home – as well as neighbourhoods and communities – as characterized by the symbolic and emotional functions as people age (Rowles, 1983; Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992; Gustafson, 2001a; Peace *et al.*, 2005b; Burholt, 2006; Gilroy, 2008; Gilroy, 2012; Wiles *et al.*, 2012).

This piece of work illustrated the ways in which the concept of 'ageing-in-place' might be experienced and negotiated by those 'who are NOT ageing in place, in the traditional sense of remaining in a home or community in which they have dwelt all their lives' (Andrews *et al.*, 2007). While place attachment is an influential and prominent theme of research in social gerontology, the data presented generates valuable insights into the everyday life of older people, showing that there is a need to 'rethink' the notion of ageing as a homologous category, and further research is needed to explore how the concept of ageing in place is situated from a migrant's perspective.

This argument gained significant relevance because the WHO's Age-Friendly concept has been problematized by several scholars. For example, Buffel *et al.* (2012) amongst others, have highlighted the diversity of cities and the complexities of different urban environments, emphasizing a wider tendency in ageing policies to view older people as a homologous group. They suggest the importance of raising awareness of the diversity and the heterogeneity of the older population in order to stimulate a better recognition of their diverse needs. Highlighting opportunities and disadvantages that older migrants in urban areas face in their daily lives, Buffel *et al.* (2012) suggest that these groups sometimes strive to create a 'sense of home' elsewhere. The present account has covered this knowledge gap, having showed how place-ties among an older migrant population, such as facilitators and barriers in re-creating a 'sense of home' in the context of migration. Thus, the findings of this

project might be positioned within the bigger context of policies on ageing in order to recommend implementation for policy makers. As affective bonds with places were shown to be important for health and well-being in later life, this project might contribute by showing that a 'sense of home' in the context of migration is shaped by social and political practices of belonging.

This point is in line with Andrews *et al.* (2007) who shed light on the ambiguity of the term 'aging-in-place', arguing that it is a complex process, not merely about attachment to a particular home but where the older person is continually reintegrating with places and renegotiating meanings and identity in the face of dynamic landscapes of social, political, cultural, and personal change. Therefore, this dissertation might hint to the idea that environments have to optimize opportunities for participation in the social, cultural sphere, at community and national level, to allow older adults being able to 'age-in-place'. As such, having highlighted how physical and social aspects of the environment are important characteristics in determining the quality of life in older migrants, this project might contribute to implement the discussion on emerging ideal for policy on ageing. In the light of this discussion, and the findings reported, the recommendations for policy makers are:

- understanding the challenges of growing old in different places from a migrants perspective;
- implementing social aspects of the environment to promote opportunities for social groups (communities, neighbourhood);
- optimizing opportunities for political participation at local or national level;
- encouraging and supporting place attachment, identification and sense of belonging in the context of migration for an ageing migrant population;
- assisting communities in fostering cohesion.

Moreover, this research, having highlighted the importance of transnationality, might inform migration policy to be tailored to older adults needs at national and transnational level. As such, any initiative at a policy level that can support communities to flourish, even across national boundaries, might be well received.

## **8.5 Limits and Further research**

With all of this in mind, I want to conclude this dissertation with a recognition of its limitations. Firstly, methodologically, given the amount of time dedicated to one person or to one group of people during ethnographic fieldwork, I have observed in detail a specific case study in geographical locations, at a specific historical time. Although the research addresses the topic of migration, it is not this study's aim to generalize its findings to other groups or other places. Given the situated nature of the research, it is not possible to consider it representative of the perspective of all older migrants, or to attempt to generalize it for all the Italian migrant population in Newcastle upon Tyne. Nonetheless, this project contributed to generating new knowledge within themes raised by the contemporary debate on ageing and migration. Therefore, it suggests the need of further research on the affective bonds with places from the perspective of older migrants. Secondly, I am aware that further aspects might have contributed to the diversity of data such as gender and class. It has been highlighted how the stage of life (childhood or adulthood) in which the participants migrated influenced identification and attachment to the context of migration. However, I have not explored these aspects further. Thirdly, the narratives about the older migrants' agency related to their economic development and upward mobility are problematic, as these might reiterate the trope of the 'good migrants' and consequentially establish discourses about the un/welcomed migrants. Thus, I wish to suggest further research on the sense of attachment to places by the perspective of those who have not interpret migration as an achievement and/or experienced downward mobility. Furthermore, although evidence on the relationship between membership, social engagement and positive well-being was highlighted in this research, an in-depth analyses on the contribution of place-based social opportunities for ageing migrants was lacking. Therefore, I suggest further research on these themes, to explore the contribution of ageing migrants in building community capacity and cohesion across communities. Finally, in line with Fortier's argument (2000), I also suggest considering the presence of the Italians in Britain in the context of the historical developments of ideas of race and ethnicity over definition of Englishness/Britishness systematized in the 1960s. This refers to consider the 'invisibility' attributed to the group of the Italian migrants in the UK in reference to the wider discourses on the notion of 'whiteness' aimed at fostering diversity towards the 'black' minorities. Hence, political and theoretical discourses about migration in the UK, including ethnicity and race, were much more concerned

with the Asian or Caribbean population compared to other ethnic minority groups. Thus, for opening up a scenario for further research, I suggest exploring how groups of Italian migrants themselves contributed to reiterate and perpetuate these stereotypical assumptions, and the extent to which these discourses about 'whiteness' might have had an impact on 'othering' different groups of migrants. This appears to be especially crucial in the current social and political context of Europe, as I shall elaborate briefly in the Epilogue of this thesis.

## **8.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the research demonstrated that the diversity within the relationship established with places in later life, from an older Italian migrants' perspective, influenced a number of issues, including the articulation of identity, hybridity across multiple generations and citizenship; expectation of ageing-in-place; level of mobility, ranging from the more mobile, having a transnational lifestyle, to the non-mobile; and finally, a sense of attachment and identification with places to belong to and in which to grow older. Consequentially, this helped to define ageing at the intersection with migration.

In fact, by exploring the articulation of belonging to places and a sense of attachment to these, it was possible to have a better understanding of the idea of ageing through places. This was based on a comparison of alternative possible ways to age in places from which these people had migrated, or elsewhere. Meanings of places and experiences of migration had shaped the sense of identity. This discussion allowed a reflection on the opportunities or limitations encountered at the time of the interviews in order to identify the conditions in which to experience a positive ageing. These referred to places and practices that influence health and well-being in later life from an older Italian migrants' perspective.

## Epilogue: Brexit: migration framed as a ‘problem’

“In Newcastle upon Tyne, the 25th of June 2016, in the wake of the referendum over the UK’s membership of the EU, the English Defence League demonstrators, occupying the area around the Grey’s Monument in the city center, waved a banner, which read: “Stop immigration, start repatriation”. According to media accounts of these days, the march for the repatriation of immigrants in Newcastle was not an isolated event: several protestors in different occasions and places of Britain vowed to send back migrants to where they belong.”

(Extract from fieldwork diary, June 2016)

Recently, the study of Jones *et al.* (2017) illustrates how the signifiers ‘migrant’ and ‘migration’ have become a long standing concern in public opinion pools. Analysing the movement of the ‘Go Home’ van, the authors pointed out at how the Brexit outcomes to ‘Leave’ Europe might be seen as the climax of anti-immigration rhetoric across Britain (Jones *et al.*, 2017, p. 3). They remarked that physical and verbal abuse towards European and minority people reported in those days were linked directly to the Leave vote. The scholars assert that anger and xenophobia were expected to become more intense, also due to the economic uncertainty and the renewed possibility of Scottish independence (Jones *et al.*, 2017, p. 9). These acts reveal an outburst of hostility through migrants, after a political campaign largely focused on the ‘problem’ of migration, highlight that the EU vote has not been interpreted only as moment of rupture with European trade or having effects on public finances. It looks like that immigration is considered as a social, cultural and economic threat in Britain (Piacentini, 2016; Vargas-Silva, 2016; Jones *et al.*, 2017) and beyond<sup>78</sup>.

Although, nowadays, there is not a simple way to provide any clear explanation to questions that animate public debates in relation to mobility and migration, these political, social and cultural phenomena are eventually so urgent to be taken into account from a scholarly perspective. In particular, current public debates on the

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<sup>78</sup> For a broader overview on the pre- and post- Brexit racial tension, it is important to acknowledge the international debates on migration taking place in different context nowadays (i.e. the U.S. context during Donald’s Trump’s political campaign in 2016, anxieties expressed by several European member states towards newcomers, as asylum seekers, often seen as ‘uninvited guests’).

'problem of migration' might raise a number of issues considering the relationship migrants establish with places and the notion of 'home' among a migrant population and, specifically, for ageing migrants groups of people.

At the time of the theses submission, as the details of the decisions on UK borders control are decided upon, it is not possible to forecast precisely the consequences of such political decision. However, the recent political phenomenon of Brexit might pose different challenges to older Italian migrants currently living in the UK. For example, it might have a further impact on the idea, understanding and redefinition of Europe, European citizenship and national borders. Furthermore, there might be the risk of a new form of nationalism and nationhood as it is seeing a strong revival in Europe and not been present since 1945. This might lead reflections on negotiation of belonging and individual and collective sense of identity. Therefore, I suggest re-interpreting the findings of this dissertation by examining narratives in the context of the political and institutional framework. Moreover, based on the current changing social and cultural context, further research is needed to follow-up on sense of attachment, identity and belonging amongst older Italian migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne. As it was clear in Chapter 3, my data collection ended just as the referendum was held, and further research on these aspects might generate new insights in unpredictable ways.

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## Appendix A- Ethical Approval



Simona Palladino  
PGR Institute of Health and Society  
Medical Sciences

**Faculty of Medical Sciences**

Newcastle University  
The Medical School  
Framlington Place  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE2 4HH United Kingdom

**FACULTY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES: ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Dear Simona,

**Title:** Place Identity and Place Attachment among older Italian migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne

**Application No:** 00884 2015

**Start date to end date:** 22-09-2014 to 22-09-2017

On behalf of the Faculty of Medical Sciences Ethics Committee, I am writing to confirm that the ethical aspects of your proposal have been considered and your study has been given ethical approval.

The approval is limited to this project: **00884/2015**. If you wish for a further approval to extend this project, please submit a re-application to the FMS Ethics Committee and this will be considered.

During the course of your research project you may find it necessary to revise your protocol. Substantial changes in methodology, or changes that impact on the interface between the researcher and the participants must be considered by the FMS Ethics Committee, prior to implementation.\*

At the close of your research project, please report any adverse events that have occurred and the actions that were taken to the FMS Ethics Committee.\*

Best wishes,  
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Sutherland".

**Kimberley Sutherland**  
**On behalf of Faculty Ethics Committee**

cc.  
Professor Daniel Nettle, Chair of FMS Ethics Committee  
Ms Lois Neal, Assistant Registrar (Research Strategy)

\*Please refer to the latest guidance available on the internal Newcastle web-site.

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# Appendix B- Information Sheets

## English Version

English (p.1/2)



Researcher: Simona Palladino  
Institute of Health and Society  
Newcastle University

### Information Sheet

**Project title: Place attachment and Place identity among older Italian migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne.**

You are being invited to take part in a research study through interviews with Simona Palladino, Phd Student in Newcastle University

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

Every one of us establish connection to places: where we live, where we walk through, where we decide to go, where we wish to be... The quality of these bonds, strong or less strong, depends on our own experiences with some places, and on the meanings that we give to them.

This research focuses on sense of belonging to and identification with some places (for example home, neighborhood, urban areas, or others that we might not be able to anticipate).

We would like to collect voices of migrants, older Italian migrants in particular, living in Newcastle upon Tyne or surroundings areas. We are interested in histories of migration, meanings of home, and experiences of the city in significant public places.

#### **What does participation involve?**

If you want to participate to this study, you would need to put aside two hours of your time for each interview. Your participation to the research is voluntary, therefore, you will decide how often and for how long you could commit to the project, alongside your commitments.

Please keep this information sheet and, if you agree to take part to the study, we will ask you to sign a consent form. This will be a simple form where you give us permission to use the information, shared during the interviews, only for the purpose of the study.

This study will ensure you that anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of research participants will be respected.

#### **Where does the research take place?**

The research will take place in private and public domains: your home, neighborhood where you live, and in public areas in the city of Newcastle, or in any other significant places from your point of view.

#### **What are the research methodologies?**

Adopting ethnographic research methodology, data will be collected through different research techniques such as: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, collection of life histories, autobiographical account, go-along interviews and urban walking.



Participants observations will be conducted through sharing routines or ordinary activities such as: meals, leisure times, walks through places alongside with researcher. You will decide how often and for how long you could commit to the project.

### **Privacy, Confidentiality, Anonymity**

Your personal details and any other identifiable information shared with us during the interviews will be kept strictly confidential, shared only within the research team, for research purpose.

Your personal data (name, surname, address, biographical details, addresses, postcodes, e-mail addresses, telephone numbers) and the whole recorded conversations will be held securely only by the researcher. Data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked office at Newcastle University.

Data will be treated with full confidentiality, and if published, it will not be identifiable as yours. During findings dissemination, personal details any other identifiable information will be anonymised. Pseudonyms will be used instead of participant names, unless you will request otherwise. In the latter case, the researcher will consider if it will compromise the anonymity of other participants. If so, the researcher will negotiate, in collaboration with research participants, which information are going to be revealing or not, during the dissemination of findings.

### **What will happen with my information?**

Data collected during the ethnographic research will be part of the fieldwork that the researcher complies on or close to the time of the ethnography. The conversation during the semi-structured interviews, will be audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed. We would like to take photograph of the objects and places that you share with us during the interview, to keep a record of them, which will contribute to the analyse.

The research findings will be disseminate in several ways: presented at conferences, to the funding bodies as written reports or written in academic journals. We may use some direct quotes from your interviews in academic papers and presentation.

If you wish, you will be informed about the outcome of the research project at the end of data analysis.

### **Are there any risk involved?**

There are no physical or psychological risks associated with participate in this research.

### **What will happen if I decide no longer want to take part in the research?**

You have the right to stop taking part in the research and withdrawing anytime, for any reasons, without adverse consequences. You will not be questioned on the reasons why you don't participate anymore.

You have also the right to ask question anytime throughout the research process. If there is something unclear, you can ask the researcher (Simona Palladino) anytime, in person, or via e-mail, and it will be explained to you. Her contact details are at the end of this form.

If you would like to participate to the research or if you like to know more about it, please contact:

Simona Palladino(Phd Student, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University)

Tel: 07555347587 Email: [S.Palladino1@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:S.Palladino1@newcastle.ac.uk)

## Italian Version

Forms in Italian language (p1/2)



Researcher: Simona Palladino  
Institute of Health and Society  
Newcastle University

### **Information Sheet**

**Project title: Attaccamento e Identità di luogo tra migranti italiani a Newcastle upon Tyne**

Ho il piacere di invitarLa a partecipare ad un progetto di ricerca attraverso delle interviste con la Dott.ssa Palladino Simona, PhD presso Newcastle University.

#### **Qual'è lo scopo della ricerca?**

Ognuno di noi stabilisce legami con i luoghi: dove viviamo, che attraversiamo passeggiando, dove decidiamo di andare, dove desideriamo essere... La qualità di questi legami, forti o meno forti, dipende dalle nostre esperienze con gli stessi luoghi, e dai significati che ad essi attribuiamo.

Questa ricerca riguarda il senso di appartenenza e l'identificazione ad alcuni luoghi (ad esempio abitazioni, quartieri, aree urbane, o altri luoghi che non siamo in grado di prevedere).

A noi piacerebbe ascoltare le voci di migranti, migranti italiani in particolare che vivono a Newcastle upon Tyne o aree limitrofe. Siamo interessati a storie di migrazione, significati di abitazioni, ed esperienze in zone pubbliche nella città.

#### **Cosa comporta partecipare alla ricerca?**

Se ha intenzione di partecipare alla ricerca, Lei dovrà dedicare meno di 2 ore del suo tempo per ogni intervista. La Sua partecipazione è volontaria. Lei deciderà quanto spesso e per quanto essere impegnato con la ricerca, in base ai Suoi impegni.

Per favore, conservi questo foglietto illustrativo e, se deciderà di prendere parte allo studio, noi Le chiederemo di firmare un Consent Form. Si tratta di un modulo in cui Lei ci autorizza ad utilizzare le informazioni, condivise durante l'intervista, solo per gli scopi della ricerca.

Questo progetto di ricerca assicura anonimato, riservatezza e rispetto della privacy.

#### **Dove sarà condotta la ricerca?**

La ricerca potrà essere condotta in luoghi privati e pubblici: la Sua abitazione, il quartiere in cui vive, spazi pubblici nella città di Newcastle, o in ogni altro luogo che Lei sceglierà di mostrare.

#### **Quali sono le metodologie della ricerca?**

La ricerca adotta il metodo etnografico. I dati verranno raccolti attraverso varie tecniche: osservazione partecipante, interviste semi-strutturate, raccolta di storie di vita, autobiografie, interviste mentre si effettuano passeggiate in aree urbane.



L'osservazione partecipante verrà condotta attraverso la condivisione di attività quotidiane (per esempio, pranzi, tempo libero, passeggiate con il partecipante. Lei deciderà per quanto tempo e quanto spesso può prendere impegno con il ricercatore.

**Privacy, Riservatezza, Anonimato.**

I Suoi dati personali ed ogni altro identificabile, che Lei ha rivelato nel corso delle interviste, verrà trattato con estrema riservatezza, e condiviso solo con il team di lavoro per scopi di ricerca.

I Suoi dati personali (nome, cognome, indirizzo, dettagli della sua biografia, codice postale e indirizzo e-mail o il numero di telefono) e l'intero contenuto delle conversazioni verranno custoditi dal ricercatore, nell'archivio dell'Università di Newcastle.

Massima riservatezza verrà garantita ai suoi dati, i quali, se pubblicati, non saranno identificabili come relativi alla Sua persona. Durante la divulgazione dei risultati, i suoi dati personali e ogni informazione riconducibile a Lei, sarà resa anonima. Pseudonimi verranno utilizzati al posto di nomi dei partecipanti a meno che Lei non voglia altrimenti. In tali casi, sarà il ricercatore a considerare se il rivelare la Sua identità possa compromettere l'anonimato di altri partecipanti. In tal caso, il ricercatore, in collaborazione con il partecipante, sceglierà quali dati possano essere resi riconoscibili, e quali no, durante la divulgazione dei dati.

**Cosa succederà con le mie informazioni?**

I dati che verranno raccolti durante la ricerca etnografica, faranno parte della ricerca sul campo, che il ricercatore analizzerà subito dopo. Le conversazioni durante le interviste semi-strutturate saranno audio registrate, trascritte e analizzate. Ci piacerebbe fotografare oggetti e luoghi che Lei condividerà con noi durante le interviste che faranno parte dei dati da analizzare.

I risultati della ricerca saranno divulgate in molti modi: presentati in conferenze, agli sponsor della ricerca, o come report scritti in riviste accademiche. Noi potremmo utilizzare qualche diretta frase menzionata durante le interviste.

Se Lei desidera, la terremo informata circa i risultati della ricerca al termine dell'analisi dei dati.

**Ci sono rischi da tenere in considerazione?**

Non ci sono rischi fisici o psicologici correlati alla ricerca.

**Cosa succede se decido di interrompere la partecipazione alla ricerca?**

Lei ha il diritto di interrompere la ricerca in ogni momento, per qualsiasi ragione, senza alcuna conseguenza. Non Le verrà chiesta la ragione per la quale Lei vuole interrompere la partecipazione alla ricerca.

Lei ha anche il diritto di chiedere spiegazioni ulteriori in tutto il corso della ricerca. Se c'è qualcosa di non chiaro, Lei può rivolgersi in qualsiasi momento al ricercatore (Simona Palladino), di persona o via e-mail. I contatti del ricercatore sono alla fine di questo foglio informativo.

Se Le piacerebbe partecipare o conoscere maggiori informazioni sulla ricerca, non esiti a contattare:

Simona Palladino

(Phd Student, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University)

Tel: 075-55347587

Email: [S.Palladino1@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:S.Palladino1@newcastle.ac.uk)

## Appendix C- Consent Forms



Researcher: Simona Palladino  
Institute of Health and Society  
Newcastle University

### Consent form

**Project title: Place attachment and Place identity among older Italian migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne.**

Thank you to your interest in our study.

The research focuses on the affective bonds established between people and places: place identity and place attachment. The study aims to explore how older migrants interpret sense of belonging to and identification with significant places, both in private and public domains. The project intends to collect data about histories of migration, meanings of home, and experiences in significant public places according to participants' point of view. The research will be conducted among older Italian migrants – seniors over 60 years old, with an Italian background (first, second or third generation migrants) – living in Newcastle upon Tyne or surroundings areas.

I confirm that (please tick the box as appropriate):

1	I have read and understood the information about the study, as provided above in the Information Sheet	
2	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation, and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
3	I voluntarily agree to participate in the study.	
4	I agree to audio-record the interviews, used solely for the purposes of the research.	
5	I agree that anonymised quotes from my interviews can be used for academic purposes (i.e. publications, presentations).	
6	I agree that the photographs, taken during the research process, can be used as illustration in academic presentations and publications.	
7	I understand that I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons.	
8	I would like to be informed to study findings or any engagement activities at the end of data analysis.	
9	I received a copy of this form.	
10	Select only one of the following:  - I would like my names used in the reports, so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.	
11	- I don't want my name to be used in this project.	

Participant's Name..... Date..... Participant signature.....

Researcher's Name..... Date..... Researcher Signature.....

# Consent Form - Italian Version



Researcher: Simona  
Palladino  
Institute of Health and Society  
Newcastle University

## Consent form

**Project title: Attaccamento e Identità di luogo tra migranti italiani a Newcastle upon Tyne**

Grazie per l'interesse nei confronti della nostra ricerca.

Il progetto di ricerca riguarda i legami stabiliti tra persone e luoghi: il senso di identità e attaccamento ai luoghi. Lo studio ha lo scopo di esplorare il modo in cui migranti anziani di origine italiana interpretano il senso di appartenenza e identificazione con i luoghi, pubblici e privati. Il progetto intende raccogliere dati circa le personali storie di migrazione, i significati delle abitazioni, le esperienze in spazi pubblici secondo il punto di vista dei partecipanti. La ricerca sarà condotta con anziani di età superiore ai 60, di origine italiana (prima, seconda o terza generazione di migranti) che vivono a Newcastle upon Tyne o aree limitrofe.

Io sottoscritto, confermo che: (La prego di segnalare la sua scelta attraverso una "X" al lato di ogni affermazione).

1	Io ho letto e compreso le informazioni circa lo studio fornite nel precedente foglio informativo.	
2	Io ho avuto l'opportunità di chiedere informazioni, di fare domande circa il progetto e ho avuto risposte soddisfacenti.	
3	Io partecipo alla ricerca volontariamente.	
4	Io sono d'accordo di audio-registrare le conversazioni durante le interviste, che verranno utilizzate solamente per scopi di ricerca.	
5	Io sono d'accordo di rendere anonimi estratti di conversazioni delle mie interviste che saranno finalizzati alla divulgazione in ambienti accademici (pubblicazioni, presentazioni).	
6	Io sono d'accordo che fotografie scattate durante la ricerca possono essere usate come illustrazioni in presentazioni accademiche o pubblicazioni.	
7	Io so che posso interrompere la partecipazione allo studio in qualsiasi momento, senza dare spiegazioni.	
8	Io vorrei essere informato circa i risultati della ricerca o di qualsiasi attività partecipante al termine dell'analisi dei dati.	
9	Io ho ricevuto una copia di questo modulo.	
10	Selezioni solo una delle seguenti alternative di risposta:  - Io vorrei che il mio nome venga usato nei report, in modo che ogni informazione a cui ho contribuito nel progetto di ricerca possa essere riconducibile alla mia persona.	
11	- Io voglio che il mio nome NON venga utilizzato nel progetto, in modo che ogni informazione a cui ho contribuito nel progetto di ricerca possa NON essere riconducibile alla mia persona.	

Nome del Partecipante..... Data..... Firma.....

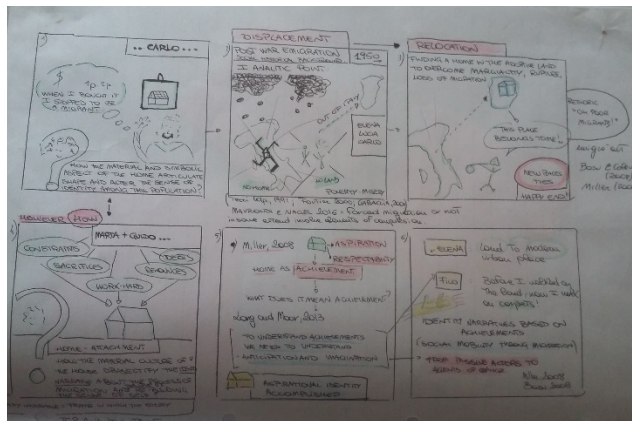
Nome del Ricercatore..... Date..... Firma.....

## Appendix D- Topic Guide for Interviews with participants

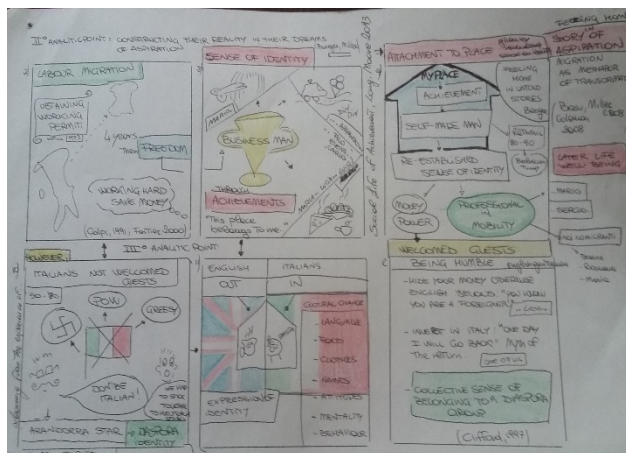
- **Preliminary information:** scope interest for participating to the interview;
- **Life-story:** Tell me your story: where you were born? How old are you? How was your childhood? Adolhood? Are you married? Widow? Children? Grandchildren? Job?
- **Experience of Migration:** Why you emigrated? How this jouney started? Are you happy of have migrated? Have you lived somewhere else before Newcastle?  
Family history (for second and third migrant generation): When/how your parents came over to the UK from Italy?  
What was the need for Italians to migrate? Why do you think Italians choose Newcastle?
- **Migration status:** Citizenship? Do you vote in the UK? Can you read and write in English? Do you receive an Italian pension? What does it mean being an English with Italian origins? What does it mean being a wife/husband of an Italian migrant?
- **Attachment to places:** Would you like to tell me about places that are significant to you. Are there any places that remind you anything nice?  
**Attachment to Newcastle:** What's the best thing of Newcastle? How was you first impression of Newcastle? How Newcastle changed since you moved? Where do you go when you visit Newcastle? Is there any place outside Newcastle that you like to visit?  
**Attachment to Italy:** Are you traveling to visit Italy? What's your link with Italy? Home? Relatives? What's your memory of Italy? Do you miss anything of your italian life? Have you ever thought to move back to Italy?
- **Identification to places:** If you need to place you anywhere, which place would you choose? Italy or England? What's your sense of home? Do you consider yourself a migrant?  
**Identification to the Italian identity :** Are you in contact with any other Italian in Newcastle? Based on your experience, how Italians were perceived in the UK? Do you speak Italian? Do your children/grandchildren speak Italian? Is there anything you do in your daily life that express your italian identity (such as food, religion, football)?
- **Ageing:** Social life: mobility? Hobbies? Technology? Engament? Do you feel attached to your house/ neighborhood/communities? What is the meaning of ageing in Newcastle? What's the difference between ageing in Newcastle and in Italy? Can you compare with anyone of your peer in Italy? Do you feel home in this moment of your life? How your life changed now that you are a widow/er?
- **House:** What's the meaning of this house for you? Are there here any meaningful objects? What is the room where you spend most of your time?
- **Envisioning the future:** Where do you wish to spend the last days of your life? Places where you wish to be buried? Have you ever felt a migrant? Have you got any regret about your life?
- **Political ideas:** What do you think about the contemporary migration? What do you think about Brexit?

## Appendix E- Examples of Comics

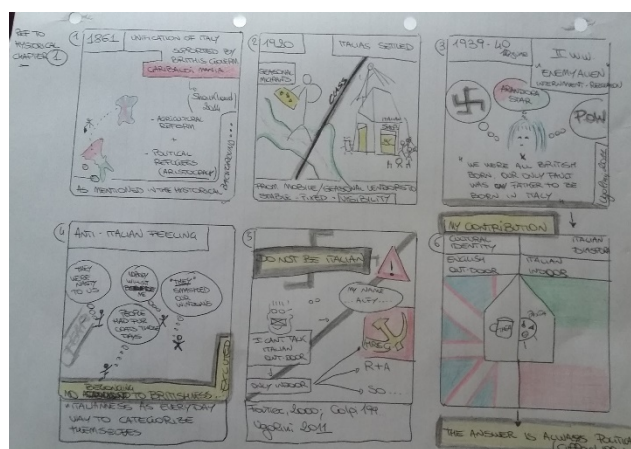
These following comics were generated during the data analyses stage, searching for themes, as articulated in the section 3.6.2



Example 1 – Findings Chapters 5



Examples 2 – Findings Chapter 6



Example 3 – Chapter 7



## Appendix F- Poster Presentations

### British Gerontology Society Conference 2015

(AWARDED as the Best Conference Poster, 03-07-2015, Newcastle upon Tyne)

# Place Identity and Place Attachment among Older Italian Migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne



**Simona Palladino**

PhD Candidate

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Supervisors: Dr. Katie Brittain, Dr. Cathrine Degnen

#### Introduction

Place Identity and Place Attachment are affective bonds between people and places that contribute significantly to health and well-being in later life [1;2;5].

Whilst place attachment in older age has been investigated from a wide range of scholarly perspectives, the ways in which this might be experienced and negotiated by people who are ageing away from their home countries is relatively a neglected area of research.

#### Aim

This study aims to gain a better understanding of affective bonds established with and through places in later life from the perspective of members of a migrant population.

By highlighting the perspective of older Italian migrants living in Newcastle upon Tyne, or surroundings areas (over 60 years old; first, second or third generation migrant) experiences of private and public places will be explored and the meanings attributed to them.

#### Objectives

Exploring:

- facilitators and barriers to place attachments;
- how older Italian migrants re-negotiate sense of identity in different cultural and social environments;
- the way place attachment and place identity across public and private domains influence health and well-being among this population.

#### Methods

Data has been collected through 11 months of ethnographic research (July 2015- June 2016).

It incorporates:

- Participant observation,
- Semi-structured interviews,
- Visual documentation of places where data collection took places



#### Summary

The research project will:

- provide a better understanding of the extent to which place identity and place attachment relate to experiences of healthy aging and well-being among older migrants;
- identify implications for identity, mobility and inclusivity in older age for a migrant group.

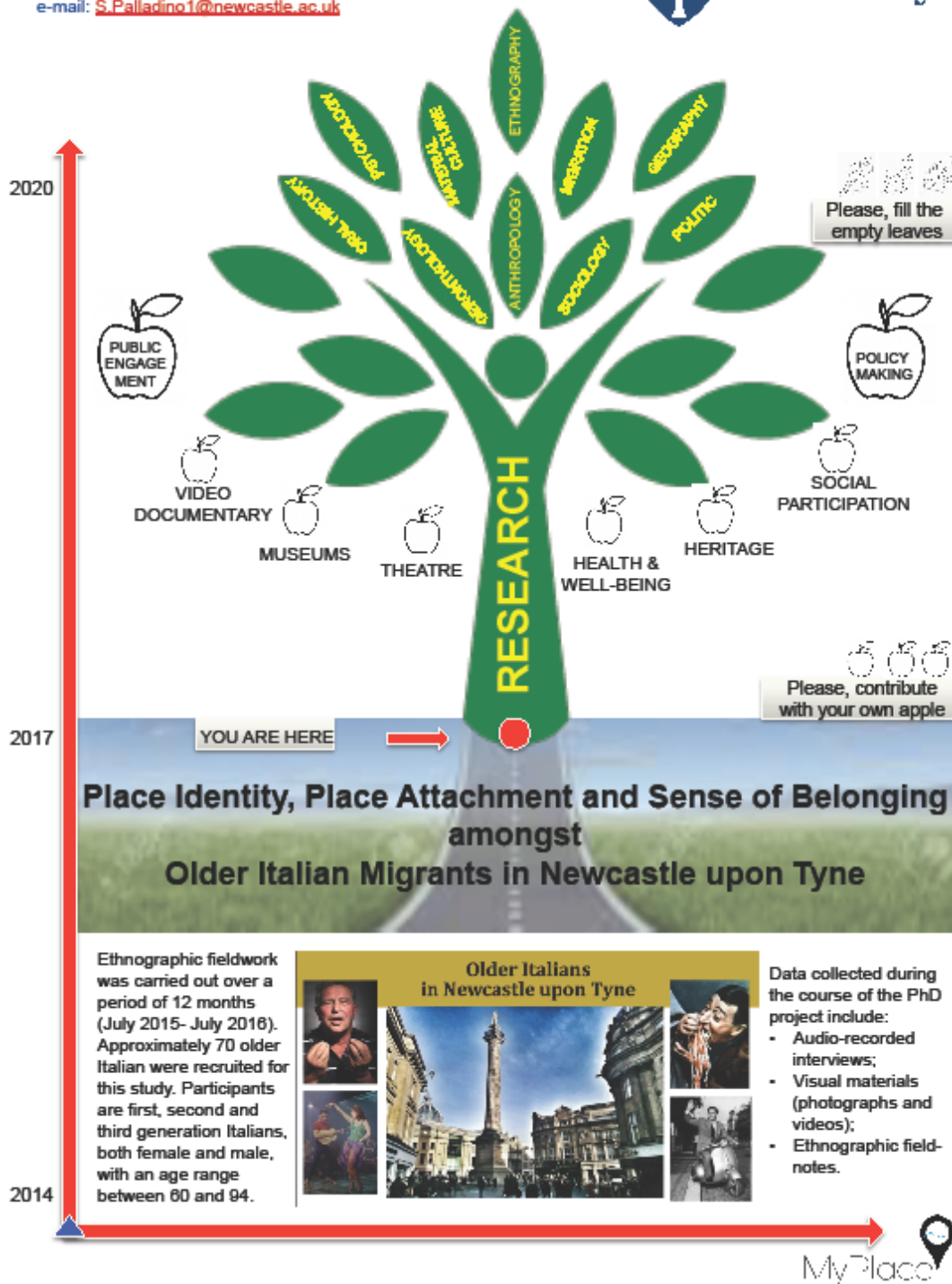
Newcastle  
Biomedical Research Centre

Open Lab

MyPlace  
Mobility and Place for Age-Friendly City Environment

#### References

1. Andrews, G.J., Evans, J. Wiles, J.L. (2013). Re-spacing and Re-placing Gerontology: Relationality and Affect, *Ageing and Society*, 33-8
2. Buffel T., Phillipson C., Sharif T., (2012). Ageing in Urban Environments: Developing "Age-Friendly" cities, *Critical Social Policy*, 32-4
3. Wiles J.L., Allen R.E.S., Palmer A.J., Hayman K.J., Keeling S., Kerse N. (2009). Older People and their Social Spaces: a study of well-being and attachment to place in Aotearoa New Zealand, *Social Science & Medicine*, 68-4



# Place Identity and Place Attachment amongst Older Italian Migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK



**Simona Palladino**

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Supervisors:

Dr. Cathrine Degnen, Dr. Katie Brittain, Dr. Suzanne Moffatt

## Introduction

Place Identity and Place Attachment are affective bonds between people and places that contribute significantly to health and well-being in later life. However, the ways in which these might be experienced and negotiated by an older migrant population is a relatively neglected area of research.



## Aim

This study aims to gain a better understanding of affective bonds established with and through places from the perspective of older Italian migrants.

## Research question

Adopting the perspective of geographical gerontology and social anthropology,



the study focuses on how meanings and experiences of "ageing away" from home countries shape processes of negotiation and re-construction of place ties in different cultural and social contexts.

## Participants

Participants are first, second and third generation Italians, both female and male, with an age range between 60 and 94, living in Newcastle upon Tyne, or surrounding areas.



This flyer was used to advertise the research project and recruit participants. Illustrating the city of Newcastle, it aimed to call the attention of Italian people, inviting them to share their story of life. The flyers were distributed around shops and public places relevant for the Italian community.

## Methods

Ethnographic fieldwork was carried out over a period of 12 months (July 2015- July 2016).

### Data collected:

- Ethnographic field-notes of participant observation;
- Audio-recorded interviews;
- Visual documentation (photographs and videos realized during the research encounters).



Participant observation was conducted mainly in a leisure centre for older Italian migrants, on a weekly basis and other social events. Approximately 70 older Italians were recruited for this study. The 41 audio-recorded interviews were conducted with 27 participants.

## Findings

Data gathered generated narratives about ageing in the context of migration, that brought into views processes of negotiation, contestation and revision of the past into the present. These contribute to the construction of a sense of identity, attachment and a sense of belonging amongst an older Italian migrant population.

I have focused on:

• Relevance of **MATERIAL CULTURE**

• Experiences of **SOCIAL MOBILITY**

• Meanings of **CULTURAL IDENTITY**

in the attempt to re-create a familiar landscape in private domains ("place-making" practice). This helps overcome contingencies of ageing, and influences health and well-being in a migrant population;

as interpreted retrospectively, that provide a sense of agency in later life, helping to establish a sense of identity after migration;

that shifted and changed over time in different cultural, historical, political and social contexts; shaped by "discourses" on migration.



Each research encounter took an average of 3 hours. This often took place in participants' houses or in their own businesses.

## Conclusion

Acknowledging the diversity and the heterogeneity of an older Italian migrant population, processes of identification and attachment with and through places in later life are variable, open, dynamic and in a constant flux of contestation. These influence health and well-being in an aging migrant group of people.



The interviews were not always "one to one". The diversity of each research encounter is given by the presence of family members or friends.



This picture refers to a photo exhibition that showed some research findings to the participants.

NEVER MIND IF YOU DON'T SPEAK ITALIAN  
WE SPEAK A GOOD  
BROKEN ENGLISH



## Appendix G- Oral Presentations

NUIA (Newcastle University Institute for Ageing) - Postgraduate Student Research Day  
Great North Museum, Newcastle (10/03/2015)

Positional Paper CHI15 - Workshop in Developing Skills for Social and Emotional Wellbeing  
CHI2015 - Seoul, South Korea (19/04/2015)

NIHR (NIHR Newcastle Biomedical Research Centre) - Postgraduate Research Showcase, Great North Museum, Newcastle (01/06/2015)

Oral Presentation - 44th Annual Conference of the British Society of Gerontology, Newcastle (01/07/2015)

**Migrating Objects: Material Culture and Italian Identities**  
Calandra Italian American Institute - New York (30/04/2016)

Workshop Organiser - "Enchanted Objects"  
DEN - Digital Economy Network - Summer School 2016 (18/07/2016)

Reflecting on Migrants Memories through Biographical Objects: Perspectives of Older Italian Migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK  
University of Leeds – (03/05/2017) Conference on Migration and Transcultural Memory

**Workshop Organiser** - "The Emotional Ethnographer: a journey through fieldwork", Durham University (20/03/2017)

Thesis presentation- Migration Showcase, Newcastle University (19/05/2017)

**IdeasFest, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums**  
Shipley Gallery, Gateshead (05/10/2017)

**Event Organizer** Launch Event of the Documentary: 'Age is Just a Bingo Number', Tyneside Cinema (13/05/2018)

PhD presentation, CONNECT Ageing- Newcastle University (22/05/2018)

**Event Organizer** First Public Screening of the Documentary 'Age is Just a Bingo Number' for the 'Inspired by' at Newcastle University for the 'Great Exhibition of the North'. The Boiler House (31/08/2018)

## Appendix H- Project of Public Engagement: Video-Documentary

'Film-ethnography about older Italian migrants in Newcastle upon Tyne- funded by Engage FMS/Creative Art Practices AWARD 2017. Funding award (£4742) for realizing the documentary 'Age is Just a Bingo Number' (12-09-2017)

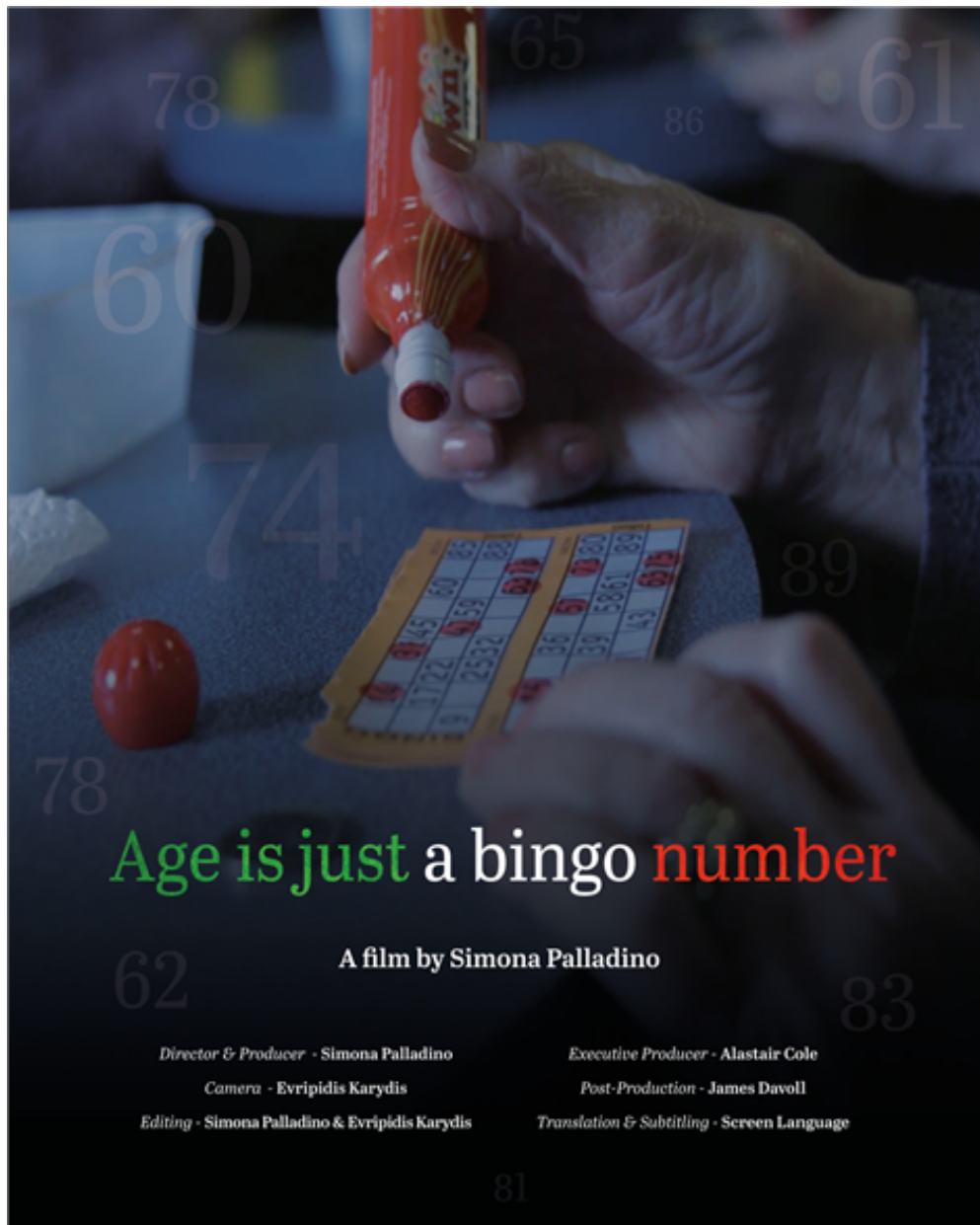


Figure 19 Video-documentary 'Age is Just a Bingo Number' by Simona Palladino

